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In re SHAKESPEARE  
BEECHING v. GREENWOOD  
REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT

THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM  
RESTATED. BY G. G. GREENWOOD,  
M.P. Demy 8vo.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE:  
PLAYER, PLAYMAKER AND POET.  
A REPLY TO MR. GEORGE GREENWOOD,  
M.P. BY H. C. BEECHING, D. Litt., Canon  
of Westminster. Crown 8vo.

In re SHAKESPEARE  
BEECHING v. GREENWOOD &  
REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT  
BY G. G. GREENWOOD, M.P.  
AUTHOR OF "THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM RESTATED"

Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the Canon's mouth.

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## PREFACE

**O**N November 25th, 1908, Canon Beeching read a lengthy paper before the Royal Society of Literature by way of answer to my book, *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. By the kindness of the Secretary to the Society, Dr. Percy Ames, I received an invitation to be present, and by the kindness of Lord Collins, who presided, I was allowed, at the conclusion of Canon Beeching's paper, to utter a few words, not indeed of reply—there was no time for that—but of protest against a misstatement and, as I conceived myself justified in calling it, a mere travesty of my arguments.<sup>1</sup> The Canon has now published his paper, together with two lectures delivered by him at the Royal

<sup>1</sup> "I think it was generally recognized," wrote a distinguished Fellow of the Society on November 28th, "that you were at a double disadvantage, having your arguments caricatured by an opponent and insufficient time for reply." To anticipate critics on the pounce let me say at once that I, of course, make no charge of conscious and deliberate misrepresentation. I would rather call it "very remarkable," and I think this will be the opinion of the reader who will have the patience to read the following pages.

Institution previously to the publication of my book, under the title of *William Shakespeare, Player, Playmaker, and Poet. A Reply to Mr. George Greenwood, M.P.* This "Reply" I propose now to examine.

The Canon is so kind as to say at the outset (p. 2) that I am provided with "much of the equipment of the successful practitioner at the Old Bailey." I do not know exactly what this may be intended to imply. For myself I never practised at the Old Bailey, though I remember that, in my young days, I held two or three briefs there. I remember, too, being impressed by the excellent manner in which the work was, for the most part, done in those courts. Whether or not my own work has in any way benefited by that example of efficiency I must leave to my readers to judge. Canon Beeching himself is provided with all the equipment of the Theologian, and those who understand what that means will appreciate the disadvantage at which a layman finds himself when he has to contend against a sacerdotal dialectician. The Canon has a further advantage. His book is a short one and is sold at two shillings, whereas, I am sorry to say, Mr. John Lane found it impossible to issue my bulky volume at less than

the somewhat deterrent price of one guinea. Many persons, therefore, I have no doubt, will read the "reply" who have not the leisure, or who will not take the trouble, to peruse my five hundred pages. Nay, I am almost inclined to think that Canon Beeching's "short method" must be primarily intended for such; for he has adopted a plan well known to controversialists. He has put into my mouth arguments which I never uttered, and which I should not dream of uttering, and has proceeded to demolish them with great self-satisfaction and with the most entire success. This method has the advantage of being a remarkably easy one, and is, frequently, very effectual in attaining the object in view. It has, indeed, so far as I know, only one objection, but as that, no doubt, has at once suggested itself to the reader, it is not necessary that I should enlarge upon it. I will only say now, as I said to the audience at 20 Hanover Square, that if any member of the reading and thinking public should deem it worth while to form an honest judgment of my book as a whole and of the arguments there set forth, he must have the patience to read the original. Those, on the other hand, who are content to judge of that work by Canon Beeching's

travesty will, I fear, be like the afflicted persons in Hans Andersen's charming story, who saw all things through a distorting medium. They, too, will have in their eyes some fragment of that splintered mirror which made truth appear ridiculous because the reflections presented it in caricature.

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# IN RE SHAKESPEARE

## BEECHING v. GREENWOOD &

### REJOINDER ON BEHALF OF THE DEFENDANT

## CHAPTER I

### SPELLING AND HANDWRITING

CANON BEECHING, in his dedicatory letter to the "Treasurer of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn," describes my book as "the latest statement by a lawyer, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., of the Middle Temple, of a curious paradox which seems to have a special fascination for legal minds; I mean the opinion originated by a Miss Delia Bacon in America, and since imported into this country, that 'Shakespeare's' works were written by the great Lord Chancellor, her namesake."

Now the Canon in his Preface (p. 3) speaks of what he is pleased to call my "forensic artifices." If I have employed such in my book (and I certainly am not aware that I have done so) I will

set this passage against them as a notable example not, indeed, of "forensic," but of sacerdotal artifice. It is really very subtly conceived. It is quite in accordance with the wisdom of the serpent to prejudice the reader's mind at the outset against the author whose work you are going to attack. The Baconian theory lends itself to ridicule. It has been brought into discredit by the extreme pretensions and absurdities of some fanatical enthusiasts. It is an American importation. And did not poor Miss Delia Bacon end her days under restraint as a harmless lunatic? Let readers note, therefore, that this "lawyer," viz. "Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., of the Middle Temple," is but the latest propounder of this "curious paradox," and then, dear brethren, I venture to think it is not likely that your faith will suffer much at the hands of this poor perverted heretic!

It is useless, of course, to point out that I expressly state in my Preface that I make no attempt whatever to uphold the Baconian theory; that I confine myself entirely to "the negative proposition, viz. that Shakspeare of Stratford was not the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*"; that "I have made no attempt to deal with the positive side of the question," and that, throughout my book, I advance no single argument in support of the Baconian hypothesis. All that is nothing to Canon Beeching, as it is nothing to certain re-

viewers, who, not having had time, possibly, to read my book, persist in making me a Baconian *malgré moi*, and find it, doubtless,<sup>1</sup> mighty convenient to do so. True it is that Canon Beeching writes further on (p. vi), "*the latest defender of the paradox* has restricted himself to a denial of the Shakespearian authorship, without asserting the Baconian." But what *is* the "paradox"? The Canon has himself told us. It is "that 'Shakespeare's' works were written by the great Lord Chancellor." *That* therefore is the paradox which I am to be taken as defending, although I have said no single word in defence of it—nay, although I have expressly disavowed it! If these are the controversial methods which pass as fair in Little Cloisters, Westminster, I very much prefer the atmosphere and ethics of the "Old Bailey."

But such preliminary aberrations from the path of accuracy need not detain us long. They are only "pretty Fanny's way." I now come to a matter of much greater importance. I allude to what I have written concerning the spelling of the names Shakespeare and Shakspeare, and Canon Beeching's comments thereon. I am very glad to have the opportunity of dealing with this matter, because some extraordinary absurdities have been

<sup>1</sup> I shall frequently make use of this convenient adverb, and shall not always deem it necessary to put it in inverted commas. *Verbum sapienti.*

written on the subject. I have been accused, for instance, of postulating "two Shakespeares"—"two Dromios, as like as two peas," I think one imaginative reviewer wrote—one of whom called himself Shakespeare and the other Shakspere; and with maintaining that the former gentleman wrote the *Plays* and *Poems*, while the latter gentleman had nothing whatever to do with them. It is the time-honoured joke over again. "*Shakespeare* was not written by Shakespeare, but by another gentleman of the same name!" Of course, nobody who had taken the trouble to read my book would have attributed such egregious nonsense to me unless with the deliberate intention to misrepresent; but, alas, reviewers, as I have reason to know, are a hard-worked and badly paid class, and as the Land Commissioners in Ireland were said to have poked the ends of their walking-sticks into the ground and then to have smelt them, in order to ascertain at what rent the land should be let, so I fear some of the critical fraternity think themselves qualified to write about a book when they have merely opened it and, perhaps, just sniffed the pages thereof!<sup>1</sup>

What I have really said upon this question of

<sup>1</sup> One well-known humorist who made great fun out of my book, or, rather, out of what he conceived I had written, confessed to me that he had not even seen it. He had read a short notice in some newspaper. I am glad to add that he afterwards made generous amends in a second article.

nomenclature I will explain presently in a very few words, and, I trust, quite clearly. But let me now come to what Canon Beeching has written concerning my treatment of the matter. In my book (p. 1) I compare the statement that "we know more about the life of Shakspere than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him" to that "form of bluff" which we sometimes hear in a law court, when a counsel, "without a leg to stand upon," asseverates to the jury that "his case has been proved up to the hilt." Canon Beeching fastens upon the word "bluff" and, as schoolboys are wont to do, retaliates with a "*tu quoque*"; a form of compliment which I accept with great equanimity. "The other artifice which Mr. Greenwood himself allows me to call forensic (p. 1) is 'bluff'; and it is curious to discover that the very keystone of Mr. Greenwood's elaborate piece of architecture is nothing better—I mean his assumption that the difference between two spellings of Shakespeare's name is significant. Throughout his book he distinguishes 'Shakspere' the player from 'Shake-speare' the poet; as though this assignment of the two spellings were not, as it is, a mere fancy of his own, but clear on the face of the documents, and indisputable."

Now this is, really, an example of "the economy of truth" so remarkable that I invite

the reader's earnest attention to it. I presume that Canon Beeching had read my "Notice to the Reader," immediately following the title-page. If so, he read the following: "In this work I have followed the convenient practice of writing 'Shakespeare' where I am speaking of the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*, and 'Shakspeare' where I refer to William Shakspeare of Stratford (*whether he was or was not the author in question*), except in quotations, where I, of course, follow the originals." My argument being that the Stratford player was not the author of "the works of Shakespeare," it was obviously necessary, in order to avoid confusion, to make this distinction, and the above-mentioned is generally recognized as the best method of doing so in order to avoid constant circumlocution. The distinction is made for the sake of clearness and convenience, and it involves no assumption whatever as to "the documents." And so far from its being "the very keystone" of my "piece of architecture," I, in fact, attribute very small significance indeed to the spelling of the name.

But before going on to examine the various deductions which Canon Beeching makes from this false premiss, let me state simply and clearly what I *have* said concerning the spelling of the name. To put it in one word, all that I say is that "Shakespeare," and, more particularly,

“Shake-speare,” makes a very good pseudonym ; while Shaksper, or Shakspere, or Shaxpur, or any other of the almost innumerable variations of the name, do not.

When, for instance, the author of *Venus and Adonis* published that extraordinary poem (as to which I would beg the reader to consult my book, chapter III), in the year 1593, as “the first heir” of his “invention,” with a dedication to the Earl of Southampton, signed “Shakespeare,” my firm belief is that that signature was not, in truth and in fact, the subscription of the Stratford player (whether any of his contemporaries believed it to be so I do not now stop to inquire), but that the name was used as a convenient *nom de plume* by a writer of high position, and one who was the representative of the highest culture of his day. And this is, in truth, all the importance that I attach to the spelling of the name “Shakespeare,” or “Shake-speare,” as distinguished from “Shaksper” or “Shakspere.” “The name of Shakespeare, or *Shake-speare*, for so, without doubt, it was originally written, were we to regard etymology, might lead us to suppose that the founder of the family, in the tenth or eleventh century, before surnames became common, had, like Longue-espee, or Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, distinguished himself by military achievements, and thence obtained this designation.”

So wrote Malone many years ago. (See Boswell's *Malone*, 1821, Vol. II, p. 14.) This is in accordance with what old Thomas Fuller writes, viz. that the name suggests *Martial* in its warlike sound, "whence some may conjecture him of military extraction, *hasti-vibrans* or Shake-speare" (quoted at pp. 36 and 519 of my book). And, similarly, Spenser is supposed by some to allude to Shakespeare when he writes of Aetion, "whose muse, full of high thought's invention, doth like himself heroically sound."

It is hardly necessary in this connexion to recall Jonson's often quoted lines, where he says of Shakespeare that "he seems to *shake a lance*, as brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance."

Now, obviously, if the man whom the late Professor Garnett has not hesitated to describe as "a Stratford rustic"<sup>1</sup> did not write the *Plays* and *Poems*, the name "Shakespeare" was a pseudonym; obviously, also, it was an excellent one. And because I have stated my belief that such was the fact, I have been charged with having given utterance to absurdities "gross as a mountain, open, palpable." But prejudice so blinds the eye of criticism that it often leads to errors quite as

<sup>1</sup> A reviewer has ascribed to me the expression "a Stratford yokel." I have never once made use of it, and I have only used the term "Stratford rustic" by way of quotation from Professor Garnett. (See *English Literature, an Illustrated Record*, Garnett and Gosse, Vol. II, p. 199.)



bad as those inspired by deliberate intention to pervert the truth.

But that is not all, it will be said. Have you not asserted that the Stratford player, so far as known, always wrote his name "Shakspere," and never "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare"? Yes, certainly, I have made that statement, and I am prepared to reassert it, though I may say at once that I do not attach very great importance to the fact. So far, indeed, from this being "the key-stone" of my arch, it is just a brick that may be built into it, or taken away at pleasure. But I do not accept the Canon's analogy. The cumulative arguments for the anti-Stratfordian faith are, as I have said in my book (p. 17 note), like many strands that together form a strong rope. The Canon's *pontifical* metaphors do not suit the case.

And now let us examine the proposition, disputed by Canon Beeching, viz. that the Stratford man wrote his name "Shakspere" and not "Shakespeare" in the five signatures which are all that have come down to us.

These five signatures were penned, two of them in March 1613, on a purchase deed and a mortgage deed respectively, and three of them, in March 1616, on Shakspere's Will. Facsimiles of them have been published over and over again; by Malone, for instance, about 120 years ago. But Shakspere's signatures were written nearly

300 years ago, and ink has an unfortunate habit of fading. Thus the ink of the first Will signature has, as Mr. Lee tells us, "faded almost beyond recognition." But there is little or no dispute that the 1613 signatures are "Shakspere." They are so given by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, pp. 34 and 36). But, says Mr. Lee, "Shakespeare apparently deemed it needful to confine his signature to the narrow strip of parchment that was inserted in the fabric of the deed to bear the seal, and he consequently lacked adequate space wherein to complete his autograph." Let us look, then, at the Will signatures. Now Malone, one of the ablest and acutest of Shakespearean critics, examined these with the greatest possible care, and he had the advantage of inspecting them when the ink was fresher by some 120 years than it is now. The conclusion to which he came was this: "In the signature of his [Shakspere's] name subscribed to his Will . . . certainly the letter 'a' is not to be found in the second syllable." Of the same opinion was a later critic of very high standing, to whom orthodox Shakespeareans appeal with great confidence when it suits them to do so. I allude to Mr. James Spedding, who wrote, concerning the name as it appears in the Northumberland Manuscript, "the name of Shakespeare is spelt in every case as it was always *printed* in those days, and not as he himself in

any known case ever wrote it." It is not, indeed, the fact that the name was *always* printed "Shakespeare" in those days, for there are many instances to the contrary, but the passage quoted from the preface to *A Conference of Pleasure* clearly shows what Mr. Spedding's opinion was with regard to Shakspeare's own usage. Dr. Furnivall, as is well known, invariably makes use of the form "Shakspeare." "This spelling of our great Poet's name," he writes, "is taken from the only unquestionably genuine signatures of his that we possess. . . . None of the signatures have an *e* after the *k*; four have no *a* after the first *e*; the fifth I read *-eere*.<sup>1</sup> The *e* and *a* had their French sounds, which explain the forms 'Shaxper,' etc. Though it has hitherto been too much to ask people to suppose that SHAKSPERE knew how to spell his own name, I hope the demand may not prove too great for the imagination of the members of the New Society."

Let us now consult a critic whose honesty no one will be found to impugn. I allude to Dr. Ingleby, from whose work *Shakespeare: The Man and The Book* I have taken the above quotation. And what says Dr. Ingleby himself? "Unquestionably some, probably all, of the five signatures of Shakespeare are Shakspeare; and certainly none of them has the *e* after the *k*."

<sup>1</sup> But this, says Dr. Ingleby, is a mistake.

And again, "We contend that the two last signatures to the will are not SHAKSPEARE, but, like Malone's tracing of the first (now partly obliterated), SHAKSPERE."

Here we must note that Mr. Lee does not dispute that the first of the Will signatures is "Shakspeare"; for, although the ink has now faded almost beyond recognition, "that it was 'Shakspeare' may be inferred from the facsimile made by George Steevens in 1776." Malone, as Dr. Ingleby observes, made a tracing of it. Now I am fully aware of the great latitude which prevailed in Shakspeare's days with regard to spelling, but I think we may doubt if a man signing his name three times on one occasion, and to the same document, and that document his Will, would have indulged in a variety of signatures.

But what said Sir Frederic Madden, whom Dr. Ingleby cites as "the most accomplished palæographic expert of his day"? "The first of these signatures [i.e. to the Will], subscribed on the first sheet, at the right-hand corner of the paper, is decidedly William Shakspeare, and no one has ventured to raise a doubt respecting the six last letters. The second signature is at the left-hand corner of the second sheet, and is also clearly Will'm Shakspeare, although from the tail of the letter *h* of the line above intervening between the *e* and *r*, Chalmers would fain raise an

idle quibble as to the omission of a letter. The third signature has been the subject of greater controversy, and has usually been read, BY ME, William SHAKSPEARE. Malone, however, was the first publicly to abjure this reading, and in his *Inquiry*, p. 117, owns the error to have been pointed out to him by an anonymous correspondent, who ‘shewed most clearly, that the superfluous stroke in the letter *r* was only the tremor of his (Shakspeare’s) hand, and no *a*.’<sup>1</sup> *In this opinion, after the most scrupulous examination, I entirely concur.*” (*Observations on an Autograph of Shakspeare, and the Orthography of his Name*, 1837, pp. 11–14.) And what is Dr. Ingleby’s conclusion? “With Sir F. Madden we adopt the view that all five signatures are alike SHAKSPERE.”

In the face of this consensus of authority, which, I think, I may describe as overwhelming, Canon Beeching writes (p. 6 note), “On the will the final signature is unmistakably ‘speare’.” Mark that “*unmistakably*”! Malone, Sir F. Madden, Mr. Spedding, Dr. Ingleby, and Dr. Furnivall—to name a few high Shakespearean authorities, and their numbers might be largely added to—all came to the opposite conclusion. They all made the “mistake” which Canon Beeching says it is

<sup>1</sup> Malone subsequently came to the conclusion that this was a “mark of contraction.” See Boswell’s *Malone*, Vol. II, p. 1 note, and pp. 32 and 33 of my book.

impossible to make ! Such is modern Shakespearean criticism ! And it is of dogmatic assertion such as this that we are told we ought to speak with bated breath and in terms of whispering humbleness !

But Canon Beeching tells us that he has Dr. E. J. L. Scott's authority for saying that the second Will signature "also has the *a*." If this be so, all I can say is that, with all respect to Dr. E. J. L. Scott, I do not think his authority stands so high as that of Malone, or of Sir Frederic Madden, "the most accomplished palæographic expert of his day"; and further, I would respectfully point out that handwriting does not become more legible as the paper on which it is inscribed grows older. For this reason also I prefer the testimony of the more ancient examiners of the document. But let me hasten to add that I should not feel the argument for "the negative case" in the smallest degree weakened even if it could be proved that Shakspeare occasionally wrote an "*a*" in the second syllable of his name. That argument, as all who have taken the trouble to read my book well know, depends upon other considerations than those of spelling and handwriting.

Canon Beeching, further, informs us that "the spelling of surnames in the seventeenth century was even more inconsistent than that of ordinary words." I beg to assure the reader that I am

quite as well aware of that fact as the learned Canon himself. I myself call attention (p. 31 of my book) to the many different varieties of the spelling of the name Shakspeare. Dr. Ingleby (*op. cit.*, p. 3 note, and pp. 6 and 7) gives us some fifty different forms. Nobody, indeed, who has bestowed the slightest amount of attention to the literature of the period could be ignorant of this fact. Canon Beeching tells us that "Sir Walter Raleigh, for example, is known to have spelt his signature in five different ways—Rauley, Rawleghe, Rauleigh, Raleghe, Raleigh." But why does he omit to tell us, also, that from the age of thirty till his death he used no other signature than Raleigh?<sup>1</sup>

Upon this point the following interesting letter appeared in *The Times* of November 27th, 1908, from Sir J. K. Laughton, headed "The Seventeenth Century Spelling of Proper Names":—

"TO THE EDITOR OF *The Times*.

"SIR,—According to the report in *The Times* of this morning of his interesting paper on 'The Shakespeare Problem,' Canon Beeching made a statement which, I think, is inaccurate, and drew from it an inference which is certainly incorrect. The words reported are:—'The spelling of surnames in the seventeenth century was even more

<sup>1</sup> See Stebbing's *Life*, p. 31. The Canon cites this work, but unaccountably omits to record this important fact.

inconsistent than that of ordinary words. Sir Walter Raleigh spelt his name in five different ways.' But Raleigh—to use his own spelling—did nothing of the kind. From the death of his father in 1583, when he adopted his father's spelling of the name, to the time of his own death in 1618, he never varied. As a boy he seems to have written it Rauleygh ; but from the time he was twenty-one till 1583 he consistently signed Rauley. He would probably have considered it impudent to adopt his father's spelling. In this connexion I would ask leave to repeat what I wrote several years ago in the introduction to my *Defeat of the Spanish Armada* :—

“ ‘ It is commonly supposed that the spelling of sixteenth and seventeenth century names is indeterminate ; a mistake due partly to the carelessness of other people, but still more to what seems now the curious custom of brothers, or members of the same family, differencing their names by the spelling, in much the same way that they differenced their armorial bearings by marks of cadency. Humphrey Gylberte and John Gilberte, Thomas Cecill and (after his father's death) Robert Cecyll, Marmaduke Darell and his cousin William Darrell, are some amongst many belonging to this period. The point is really one of some importance, for attention to the spelling of signatures is frequently the only way of avoiding great confusion ; as, for instance, between George Cary of Cockington,



afterwards Lord Deputy of Ireland, George Carey of the Isle of Wight, afterwards Lord Hunsdon, and George Carew, Master of the Ordnance in Ireland, afterwards Earl of Totness. Each of these men, and indeed every man who could write, had an established signature, which he no more thought of varying than does any one at the present time.'

"I have never had occasion to examine the reputed Shakespeare signatures; but if, as I am told and as Canon Beeching seems to admit, the spelling varies, I should consider it as grounds for a suspicion that they are not all genuine; a suspicion which would be much strengthened if the signatures differ in other respects.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"J. K. LAUGHTON.

"King's College, London, Nov. 26."

All this is very interesting, and it has, no doubt, some bearing on the question whether the Stratford player ever wrote his name in other forms besides that of Shakspeare; but it has very little relevancy to the simple proposition that I have advanced, viz. that Shakespeare (or Shake-speare) makes a very excellent *nom de plume*, while Shakspeare does not.

But then, it is said, Shakspeare of Stratford was often called "Shakespeare" by others—that his

name was often written or printed so by contemporaries. I am quite aware of this very familiar fact also, and have, certainly, never denied it. As I have said (p. 35), "the form 'Shakespeare' has the sanction of legal and certainly of literary use," though by no means invariably so.<sup>1</sup> As everybody knows, the *Plays* were published either anonymously, or in the name of Shakespeare or Shake-speare,<sup>2</sup> and it is not in the least surprising that in the Folio edition of Ben Jonson's works, published in 1616, we should find, in the list of the "tragedians" who performed in *Sejanus*, the name of "Will Shake-speare," or the name "Shakespeare" among the "comedians" who played in *Every Man in his Humour*.<sup>3</sup> I repeat this was the manner in which the name had come to be spelt, as a general rule, according to literary and legal usage. Shakspere had become

<sup>1</sup> For example, in the case of the conveyance of January 1596-7, from John Shakspere to George Badger, we have "Shakespere" in the body of the deed; and William and John Combe convey land in 1602 to William Shakespere of Stratford.

<sup>2</sup> Except in the unique case of that unique play *Love's Labour's Lost*, on which much yet remains to be written.

<sup>3</sup> One of the quaintest things I have seen in this connexion is a note signed H. Davey, in *Notes and Queries* (October 31, 1908). Mr. H. Davey is good enough to inform us that "varieties of spelling in Elizabethan times do not surprise literary or historical students." But then, as he sagaciously adds, "all readers are not literary or historical students." So this literary and historical student gravely warns the ignorant outsider against "eccentric theories" to the effect that "Shakspere, an actor from

the ostensible playwright ; in his name plays had been published ; and though he himself, according to the best evidence we have, adhered to the spelling "Shakspeare," he was, at any rate in his later years, "Shakespeare" to Ben Jonson, and his fellow-players, and, doubtless, to many others of his contemporaries ; though to Walter Roche, ex-master of the Stratford Grammar School, he was "Shaxbere," to Richard Quiney, his fellow-townsmen, he was "Shackspeare," to his "fellow-countryman," Abraham Sturley, he was "Shaxsper," to Thomas Whittington, of Shottery, he was "Shaxpere," and in the marriage bond of November 1582, he is "Shagspere."

All these things, I say again, are very interesting ; but how they are evidence against my proposition that "Shakespeare" was used as a *nom de plume* I am at a loss to conceive. That it was so used, in Shakespere's time, by many writers

Stratford-on-Avon," was not "the immortal dramatist." "Such theories," he tells us, "are naturally judged beneath discussion." Where? In *Notes and Queries*! That is excellent. The learned editor will, I am sure, forgive my smiling! Mr. Davey then vouchsafes to narrate once more the old story of the spelling of Shakspeare's name in the Jonson Folio of 1616.

"This," he says, is "decisive"! Decisive of what, I wonder! And will these didactic gentlemen always imagine that nobody is acquainted with the elementary facts of literature and history except themselves? And will they never learn that it is impossible to criticize intelligently arguments which they have not taken the trouble to read or to understand?



who published works in that name is a simple fact of history. The name was used sometimes with and sometimes without the hyphen. In either form it makes a very good pseudonym, though better, I think, with than without the hyphen. Whether or not it was so used in the case of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare is the question which I have endeavoured to argue in my book.<sup>1</sup>

Before I leave this part of the subject, upon which I have been so greatly and, as I venture to think, so inexcusably misunderstood, and I must add, misrepresented, it will be convenient to deal with what Canon Beeching calls (though quite unwarrantably, as I shall presently show)

<sup>1</sup> I question whether there is in the whole of "Shakespeare" a nobler or more pathetic passage than the speech of the Duke of Buckingham in *Henry VIII* (II, 1), nor is any collection of the "Beauties of Shakespeare" deemed complete that does not include Wolsey's speech on his fall. Yet it is now the received opinion that a very large part of this play, including both these famous speeches, was written by Fletcher. "Shakespeare," therefore, was here a "pseudonym" so far as Fletcher was concerned. But is it not remarkable that a man like Fletcher, the son of a Bishop, and a man of University education, should have been content to "lie low," and see his work (and such excellent work) put forward in the name of "Shakespeare," and that everybody should have attributed it to Shakespeare till some 230 years after the death of Shakspeare of Stratford, when the truth (if truth it be) was discovered by an English critic? And if Fletcher's work was published under the pseudonym of "Shakespeare," why is it an improbable hypothesis that the work of another and greater man, also of University education, and of higher position and culture than Fletcher, was so published also?

my eighth argument. Canon Beeching (p. 20) quotes my words to this effect: "It is hardly possible to conceive that the poems and plays were written in William Shakespeare's illegible illiterate scrawl." (Incidentally I may observe that the Canon here misquotes me. I wrote "Shakespeare's," not "Shakespeare's.") My canonical censor objects to this. In the first place he observes that three of the signatures "were written on his will a month before his death," and "these," he says, "are beyond criticism *by any humane person*" (my italics). Now I trust my friends and colleagues on the Council of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will not cashier me on the ground of inhumanity; but why one is not at liberty to criticize a man's signatures written a month before his death I am really at a loss to imagine. But "perhaps," comments the tender-hearted Canon, "Mr. Greenwood was misled into calling the signatures 'illiterate' by the fact that they are written in the Old English hand," the innuendo being, of course, that I am not aware that a very great part of the literature of the period was handed down to posterity in this form of handwriting. My readers will, I venture to think, need no assurance from me that with this elementary fact also I am quite familiar. Nor am I "contemptuous," as the Canon alleges, of the

Old English hand. Such contempt would be, indeed, absurd. What I do, however, is to quote Mr. Lee to the effect that Shakspere "was never taught the Italian script, which at the time was rapidly winning its way in fashionable cultured society, and is now universal among Englishmen. Until his death Shakespeare's 'Old English' handwriting testified to his provincial education." And again, of the copyist of the dramatist's supposed manuscript, Mr. Lee says that he "was not always happy in deciphering his original, *especially when the dramatist wrote so illegibly as Shakespeare*"!<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lee, therefore, has formed the opinion that Shakspere's handwriting generally, and not his signatures only, must have been more or less illegible.

So much, then, for my use of the word "illegible." But are the signatures "illiterate"? Let me say at once that I feel by no means deeply concerned to defend the epithet. Possibly it is not deserved. Possibly Shakspere's more or less illegible scrawl was the result of carelessness, or some reason other than illiteracy. But I am by no means the first to employ the epithet. It has, in fact, been common, even amongst the orthodox. For example, I have before me a large-sized pamphlet, admirably illustrated by facsimiles, which was issued by the Librarian of the Boston

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the Folio Facsimile, p. xviii.

(U.S.A.) public library in the year 1889, concerning an interesting edition of North's *Plutarch*, printed by Richard Field (1603), wherein is found a signature which some have maintained to be a genuine Shakespearean autograph, though I do not think that that opinion has obtained acceptance among the critics. The Librarian at that date was Dr. Mellen Chamberlain, a recognized authority upon matters of this kind. "It may be observed," he writes, "that the field of comparison of the Library signature with the known originals is narrow, being limited to those written between 1613 and 1616, all of which show such a lack of facility in handwriting as would almost preclude the possibility of Shakespeare's having written the dramas attributed to him, so great is the apparent illiteracy of his signatures"!

One more observation and I leave this question of handwriting. Canon Beeching says that the two signatures to the conveyances of 1613 are "in two different scripts"; that is to say, that Shakespeare made use of one "script" on March 10th and another on March 11th of that year. All I will say upon this is to beg the reader to place the facsimiles side by side (Mr. Lee has issued all five signatures in a sixpenny pamphlet), and see for himself how much one "script" differs from the other "script," and what value he thinks ought to be attached to this latest argument.

For myself I venture to think that it may properly be represented by a *minus* quantity.

I here, finally, take leave of this matter of hand-writing, whether as a question of orthography, or of calligraphy, or of cacography ! I have done my best to explain clearly just how much importance I attach to it, and how little. I have shown how absurdly the simple proposition I have advanced has been misunderstood, and, therefore, misinterpreted by certain critics, canonical and otherwise. I am not sanguine enough to hope that these misrepresentations will not be repeated, but if so it will not be by those who have taken the trouble to read my book with care, and certainly not by those who have read this rejoinder, unless, indeed, they are such as wilfully pervert the truth ; and these may very properly be dismissed with a word from old Ben Jonson,

If they spake worse 'twere better, for of such  
To be dispraised is the most perfect praise.

*Note.*—I have been not a little amused by the letter of an “orthodox” correspondent who bears a name not unknown in literary circles, and who wrote to me : “If I attributed any real importance to the spelling I should cite (1623) Jonson’s verses ‘My *Shakspeare* rise,’ Leonard Digges’s verses ‘*Shakspeare* at length thy pious fellows give,’ etc., Sir W. Davenant’s ode “In remembrance of Mr.



William *Shakspeare*," etc. etc. I wrote in reply that, unfortunately, the name appears as "Shakespeare" in all these cases. Then came his apology. "A woman tempted me, and I fell." It appears that he had been reading *The Bacon Shakspeare Question* (1888), by Mrs. C. Stopes, and that lady, who bears, I believe, a high reputation for accuracy, has in the work in question, for some reason known to herself, changed the spelling in all these instances, and many others, to "Shakspeare"! Thus she makes W. Basse and "I.M.", in the Folio, write of "*Shakspeare*" instead of "Shake-speare," which is the form that both these writers employ. Jonson is made to say that "the players have often mentioned it as an honour to '*Shakspeare*.'" Milton is made to write, "What needs my '*Shakspeare*,'" etc. etc. Now whether the spelling is of importance or not, it is inexcusable to take liberties with it in this way. I fully understood and sympathized with the annoyance of my disgusted friend who had been so entrapped. I would add here that this rejoinder to Canon Beeching was completed before I had read an admirable article on "The Shakespearean Problem," in the *National Review* for January 1909, by George Hookham. I would very strongly recommend all who are interested in this subject to read and consider this excellently written essay. Mr. Hookham points out, with regard to the name "Shakspeare," that "the first syllable

was pronounced 'Shack,' and constantly written so," and that "it is also probable that the second syllable was pronounced 'spur.'" "Shakespeare" was, of course, pronounced differently, and the form "Shake-speare" prevented any confusion with the form "Shackspur." I believe this to be a true distinction, and the fact is not without significance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a second article (Feb. 1909) Mr. Hookham (p. 1021), speaking of Jonson's birthday poem to Bacon, inserts, in parenthesis, "not a sonnet, as Mr. Greenwood calls it." Mr. Hookham has fallen into a strange error, and has written to me to express his regret. I speak (p. 489) of Jonson's "ode" to Bacon, on his birthday. I nowhere call it a "sonnet."

## CHAPTER II

### MY SUPPOSED ARGUMENTS

CANON BEECHING, at p. 7 of his "Reply," writes as follows: "To come now to the *arguments* employed to show that the Stratford player could not have written the Shakespearian plays and poems. *I will take them one by one* [my italics] and treat them as briefly as possible."

The Canon, thereupon, sets forth fourteen brief statements, thrown into italics and duly numbered, which he gives the reader to understand are my arguments, with the further inference that I have thus stated and numbered them, one by one, in support of my case. I enter a most emphatic protest against this method of proceeding. The so-called "arguments" are, for the most part, not my arguments at all. They are "arguments" put into my mouth by Canon Beeching in order that he may have the satisfaction of replying to them, just as one sets up an "Aunt Sally" and puts clay pipes into her mouth in order to make a "cock-shy" of her defenceless head and have the

pleasure of smashing the pipes "to smithereens." I do not think the better-class of Shakespearean scholars will acclaim such methods. "*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis*," will, I think, be their very appropriate comment.

I will now proceed to examine these supposed arguments seriatim.

"(1) *The town of Stratford was insanitary.*" Canon Beeching actually has the effrontery (I can call it nothing else) to put this forward as an argument advanced by me in support of the proposition that the Stratford player did not write the *Plays* and *Poems* of "Shakespeare"! I protested against this most energetically at the meeting of the Royal Society of Literature, before which the Canon read his paper. I begged the audience, if they thought my book was worth any consideration at all, to read it for themselves and not to be misled by such gross caricatures of it. I told them that, so far, I believed I had not been suspected of "drivelling idiocy," and I assured them that I had never advanced an argument of this preposterous character in support of the above-mentioned proposition. Nevertheless Canon Beeching, in spite of my protest and disclaimer, has thought it right and seemly to repeat the statement and to publish it.

Now what is the fact? In a brief biographical notice of "Shakspere of Stratford" it was, of

course, necessary that I should place before the reader what is known of the birthplace, family, and surroundings of the supposed poet—in a word of the *environment* in which he was born, and in which he spent the first twenty-three years or so of his life. In doing so I took occasion to quote, as others have done before me, Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's description of Stratford-on-Avon as it then was. It was apparently a dirty place, and, no doubt, many other provincial towns at that time were equally dirty, although Garrick, more than two hundred years later, seems to have considered it the worst town "in all Britain" in this respect. It is true that I speak somewhat irreverently of the "fancy pictures that have been drawn of a dreamy romantic boy wandering by the pellucid stream of the Avon, and communing with nature in a populous solitude of bees and birds," because all the evidence that we have suggests that such pictures are wholly imaginary. I make no point of the epithet "pellucid," as the Canon seems to think. The Avon may have been pellucid then for all I know. Or it may not. Readers of the Comte de Grammont's Memoirs will remember how rivers were polluted in his day, even if "there were no drains," and though the swans that were cited as witnesses were not swans of Avon! But I have not investigated the history of sewerage so far as to know how exactly

matters stood at Stratford during the sixteenth century in that respect. Dr. Rolfe thought that the boy Shakspeare's delight in outdoor life (and of course he delighted in outdoor life, because the author of the *Plays* clearly did so!) "may have been intensified by the experience of the house in Henley Street, with the reeking pile of filth at the front door." Perhaps it was. Who shall say? But, really, all this is quite beside the point. Stratford may have been a dirty, squalid place (I never said it was "insanitary"—that word has been put into my mouth by Canon Beeching<sup>1</sup>), and yet the Stratford player may have become the world's poet. I have never advanced "dirty Stratford" as an argument to the contrary. "Dirty Stratford" is just one of the few known facts of Shakspeare's life, just as the illiteracy of his parents, and of his daughter Judith, are similar facts. Canon Beeching knows this very well. He knows that I have never put forward this fact as being of itself an argument in the case. How he justifies to himself his assertion that I have done so it is not for me to explain.

And here let me say, once for all, that the

<sup>1</sup> It is in fact his own word, for in his lecture "on the character of the Dramatist" (written without reference to my book) he says (p. 83), "Stratford was notoriously insanitary," and, on p. 41, he says, very truly, "It is important for us to realise in what sort of social surroundings the son grew to manhood." Physical surroundings, also, should not be left out of sight.

case against the Stratfordian authorship must, of course, be judged as a whole. If I were asked to put forward just one argument, by itself, in support of that case, I should do it in some such way as this, putting it into an interrogative form: "Knowing all that we do of Shakspeare of Stratford—so little and yet so much too much—taking into consideration all the known facts of his birth, parentage, surroundings, and early history, as well as those—meagre, indeed, and yet painfully suggestive—of his after-life and death, can we possibly believe that he was the author of, say, *Venus and Adonis*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, and *The Sonnets*?" Now to answer this question manifestly involves a prolonged study not only of the life of Shakspeare, so far as we can ascertain it, and of the traditions concerning him, but also of the "works themselves," to say nothing of the history and literature of the period. It is impossible to state the arguments by a bald method of enumeration, as Canon Beeching asserts that I have done, though, "in truth and in fact," I have, of course, done nothing of the kind.

The next in order of the "arguments" which Canon Beeching ascribes to me is this: "(2) *William Shakespeare's father could not write his name.*" Well, the fact of the illiteracy of Shakspeare's parents (Canon Beeching, of course, prefers to write "Shakespeare") is certainly an

important fact. But here, says the Canon, "there is a conflict of evidence. Mr. Lee prints, in the illustrated edition of his *Life*, a facsimile of John Shakespeare's autograph." Mr. Lee does nothing of the kind. He prints (p. 5) a reproduction of the name "Jhon Shaksper" written against John Shaksper's "mark." The reader will see this much better if he will refer to Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps's *Outlines*, Vol. I, p. 38, where he will find this marksman's signature together with many others. These are the signatures of nineteen aldermen and burgesses of Stratford-on-Avon, in 1565, of whom seven only appear to have been able to write their names. John Shaksper's name and mark will be seen second in the right-hand column. Below are the names of four other "Johns," all of them marksmen. These "Johns" all appear to be written in the same handwriting. No doubt the same scribe wrote them all. John Shaksper, it may be observed, like some others of his "marksmen" contemporaries, used two marks, one somewhat in the form of a pair of "dividers," which is the one made use of in this particular instance, the other, a rough "cross," which may be seen at page 3 of Mr. Lee's illustrated *Life*, adorning the "Sign Manual of the Poet's Father, John Shakespeare" (*sic*).

But I have thoroughly gone into this question



of the worthy John Shaksper's supposed writing in my book. It is "a fond thing vainly invented." The scribe, by the way, who wrote his name against the "pair of dividers" certainly did not write "Shakespeare." "Shaksper" seems to have been the form employed in this case.

But, says Canon Beeching, "there is no evidence that Marlowe's father could write." Possibly; but there is no evidence that he could not, as there is in the case of John Shakspere. (As to Marlowe's education, by the way, see my book at p. 74.<sup>1</sup>)

The fact that William Shakspere's father could not write cannot, thus baldly stated, be put forward as an argument to prove that William Shakspere did not write the *Plays* and *Poems*, and I have not so put it forward. But the fact that Shakspere was born of illiterate parents is certainly one to which due importance must be given when we consider the whole case for and against the Stratfordian authorship; just as the fact that Shakspere allowed his daughter to grow up in illiteracy has to be taken into consideration also.

<sup>1</sup> John Marlowe, the father of Christopher, was a member of the Shoemakers' and Tanners' Guild of Canterbury, and also acted as "clarke of St. Maries." He is said to have married the daughter of the rector of St. Peter's. There is no reason whatever, so far as I know, for supposing that he could not write. He was not a "marksman" like John Shakspere, or, at any rate, there is no evidence to that effect.

Let us now take the third of Canon Beeching's mock arguments, for mine they certainly are not.

“(3) *There is no evidence that William Shakespeare [sic] ever went to Stratford Grammar School.*”

Now I beg the reader's particular attention to what follows. Canon Beeching says that, as the school was free to all burgesses, it must be accepted that Shakspeare went there unless a presumption can be shown against it. Such a presumption he declares that I claim to have found. “There is such a presumption, replies Mr. Greenwood. ‘He never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school or of its master.’” Then, after making merry with this, he concludes: “It cannot be allowed, then, that there is any such presumption against Shakespeare's schooling as Mr. Greenwood contends for.” The Canon, therefore, deliberately asks his readers to believe that it is part of my case that Shakspeare never went to the Stratford school at all, and that I seek to found a presumption against it on the fact that Shakespeare in his works never makes mention of Stratford or the school there. It is really difficult to write with patience of such an egregious perversion of the truth. I have never argued against the probability that William Shakspeare attended for a few years at the Free Grammar School. I have never suggested that there is a presumption against it. It is no part of my case

that Shakspeare had no schooling at all; on the contrary, it is part of my case that he had a certain amount of education, and in all probability at the Stratford school. My words at the beginning of chapter II. are as follows: "That Shakspeare attended the Free School at Stratford is, as I have said, an assumption only, though by no means an improbable one." What said the late Professor Churton Collins? "Nothing is known of the place of his [Shakspeare's] education—that he was educated at the Stratford Grammar School is pure assumption" (*Ephemera Critica*, p. 213). That is simple matter of fact. But do I contend against the assumption? Decidedly not. At page 47 of my book I once more distinctly grant it as a probable one. But what about that other fact, viz. that "Shakespeare" makes no mention of the school? Well, I lament in this same chapter on "The Schooling of Shakspeare," that we have not one tittle of evidence as to what Shakspeare learnt at school, how long he stayed there, whether he was an industrious boy, whether he gave any "early presages of future renown" (to use Malone's words), and that tradition is entirely silent as to all this. In this connexion I refer to our much greater knowledge of Ben Jonson's life and schooling; and then follows this passage, part of which only the judicious Canon quotes: "Ah, 'Camden most reverend head'! What a

thousand pities it is that Shakspeare never wrote an ode to Walter Roche or Thomas Hunt; that he never in all his (supposed) writings makes mention of the Stratford school, or of its master!" That is a regret in which I should imagine every Shakespearean would sympathize. It is, indeed, a thousand pities that nothing of this sort has come down to us. But to represent this, in the face of clear and distinct utterances to the contrary, as put forward in support of a presumption raised by me that Shakspeare never went to the school at all, is, I venture to say, a perfectly inexcusable misrepresentation on the part of my canonical censor. Said I not well that he is fully provided with all the equipment of the theologian? Shade of Professor Huxley, oh that one little rag of the mantle which you wore in life might be granted to me in this unequal controversy!

The next supposed "argument" which Canon Beeching is so kind as to make me responsible for, is put in the form of a question. "(4) *Supposing Shakespeare [sic] went to the Stratford School, why should we assume that the school taught the ordinary grammar-school curriculum?*" But that is Canon Beeching's question, not mine. My question was, Why are we, in the absence of one tittle of evidence, to assume that the instruction given at the Stratford Free Grammar School was on a par with that given at the very best schools

in England at the date in question? *That*, as the reader will see, is quite a different question. "We know that Latin was taught in the school a few years before," writes Canon Beeching. Certainly, and so far as I know, nobody has ever suggested that Latin was not taught there in Shakspeare's time. That, indeed, is just the one subject that would have been taught, as I have expressly said (p. 48), and if Shakspeare attended the school for a few years, till he was thirteen years of age, at which age, according to the best evidence we have, he was withdrawn owing to his father's financial difficulties, he would, doubtless, have learned that "small Latin" with which Shakespeare is credited by Ben Jonson.

At this point Canon Beeching quotes four-and-twenty lines of Michael Drayton, whom he calls "another Warwickshire 'butcher's son,'" to show that Drayton worked hard at Latin. Then why not Shakspeare also? Well, we have no evidence to show whether Shakspeare was industrious or idle as a schoolboy, or how long he actually attended school. Certainly tradition, as I have shown in my book, and many others before me, is very far from supporting the hypothesis that he worked at books. The hitherto accepted theory has been that he was "a natural wit," with no learning, who wrote by natural inspiration as it were. As to Drayton, cited by Canon Beeching

as a witness, I shall have something to say about him presently. I do not think he will be found to support the Canon's case. On the contrary, I claim him as a witness on my side. And how his reading of Latin, with his "mild tutor," is any guide as to what was the instruction given at the Stratford school, I am at a loss to conceive. As to that, however, and what Shakspeare may be supposed to have learnt at the school, I must ask leave to refer the reader to chapter II. of my book, and to chapter v. *infra*.

The next item on the Canon's Bill of Fare is: "(5) *But Shakespeare did not stay long enough at school to acquire as much Latin as the writer of the plays shows evidence of possessing.*" I do not greatly complain of this statement, but I would rather read after the word "school," "to acquire as much classical knowledge as the late Professor Churton Collins has shown that the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of Shakespeare must have possessed."

Tradition, hitherto generally accepted, and endorsed by Rowe, says that owing to his father's pecuniary embarrassment, "and the want of his assistance at home," Shakspeare was withdrawn from school at an unusually early age, and as we have evidence that John Shakspeare was in financial straits in the year 1577, when William was thirteen years old, both Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee,

besides other biographers, accept it as probable that in this year the boy was, as Mr. Lee puts it, "enlisted by his father in an effort to restore his decaying fortunes." But some of our neo-Stratfordians, observing how important it is to keep Shakspeare as long at school as possible, in order to cram him with all the Latin that they now see "Shakespeare" must have been endowed withal, quietly throw over this inconvenient tradition, and prolong the boy's hypothetical schooling for some further years, in order to get him into the higher classes of the school! Canon Beeching, rather timorously, joins the ranks of these eclectic philosophers. "As there were no school fees to pay we need not assume that he was withdrawn as early as this." No, there were no school fees, but how would that fact supply "the want of his assistance at home," on account of which we are expressly told his father removed him from the school? I have said in my book, and I think I was justified in so saying, that these neo-Stratfordians set all sound canons of criticism at defiance by the way in which they play fast and loose with the Shakespearean tradition. When it suits their theories they accept it "as Gospel"; when it is inconvenient they reject it at their own sweet will. This observation seems to have somewhat nettled Canon Beeching. He supposes that "everybody weighs each tradition separately."

My own experience is that the modern Stratfordian accepts or rejects it according as it squares or not with his preconceived ideas. But the Canon specially refers me (p. 11 note) to some of the traditions recorded by Aubrey. There is one, for instance, which he does not "remember to have seen quoted in Mr. Greenwood's pages to the effect that William Shakespeare was a remarkably clever boy. 'There was at that time another butcher's son in this town, that was held *not at all inferior to him for a natural wit*, his acquaintance and coetanean, but died young.'" (The Canon's italics.) It is quite true that I had not thought it worth while to quote this passage from Aubrey's *Lives of Eminent Men*, but I am delighted to do so now. So there were two clever butchers' sons in Stratford at the same time—*par nobile fratrum!* And let the reader take note that Canon Beeching seems here to accept the tradition that Shakspeare's father was a butcher—not a glover or a wool-stapler, as some more apologetic biographers try to make out! No doubt these two talented boys killed calves "in high style" and in friendly rivalry! Whether "a natural wit" is exactly the same thing as "a remarkably clever boy" I am rather doubtful, but the expression is one which the "ancient witnesses" frequently apply to Shakspeare. "I have heard," wrote the Rev. John Ward (1662-3) "that Mr. Shakespeare was



a natural wit, without any art at all." "His learning was very little," says Fuller . . . "nature itself was all the art which was used upon him." "Next Nature only helpt him," wrote Leonard Digges. "A natural wit"—well, it indicates a sharp boy certainly, and no doubt Shakspeare was such. But as Canon Beeching refers me specially to Aubrey to Aubrey let us go.

"Tradition," writes the Canon (p. 11), "coming through Aubrey from Beeston the actor, says of Shakespeare, that 'though as Ben Jonson says of him, he had but 'small Latin and less Greek,' he understood Latin pretty well.'" But here is a *hiatus valde deflendus*. Why does not the Canon finish the sentence? Aubrey wrote, "He understood Latin pretty well, for he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country"! Does the Canon accept that statement too? Does he make "Shakespeare" a provincial dominie teaching "hig hag hog" to country brats? But let us have Aubrey "all in all or not at all." What more does he say? "This William being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London I guesse about 18, and was an actor at one of the play-houses, and did act exceedingly well." Why, Shakspeare married at eighteen, had his first child born to him at nineteen, was the father of twins at twenty-one, and probably did not come to

London till he was twenty-three. "And to close the whole," as Richard Farmer writes in his celebrated essay, "it is not possible, according to Aubrey himself, that Shakespeare could have been *some years a schoolmaster in the country*, on which circumstance only the supposition of his learning is professedly founded. He was not surely *very* young when he was employed to *kill Calves*, and he commenced Player about Eighteen!" When, then, I wonder, did this marvellous boy find time (before "eighteen"! ) to be "in his younger years" a country schoolmaster? And all this is subscribed "from Mr. . . . Beeston"! I am exceedingly obliged to Canon Beeching for drawing my attention to this "roving maggoty-pated man," as Anthony Wood called Aubrey; but if the reader will kindly turn to my book, and to the index thereof, he will see that I have frequently referred to him (see especially page 105 note and page 207). This, then, is the main buttress for Shakspeare's learning! "He understood Latin pretty well," because he had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, and now reprinted as *The Story of the Life*, Canon Beeching adopts the "schoolmaster" theory with a little embroidery of his own. "A youth of proved abilities," he writes (p. 50), "with a known taste for letters, might well have been employed as usher at

As to the classical knowledge which must have been possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* of "Shakespeare," I will not go over that ground again here. I have gone into the matter very thoroughly in my chapter iv. on "The Learning of Shakespeare," and to that, and to Professor Churton Collins's illuminating essays on the subject, I must respectfully refer the reader. I note, however, that Canon Beeching writes (p. 12): "In the case of Plautus there was a translation available *in manuscript*." Now the *Comedy of Errors* was performed at Gray's Inn in 1594. "It is all but certain," writes Mr. Churton Collins,

the Grammar School when his father's business failed"! Observe; the country school has now become the Stratford Grammar School, to which young William returns as a pedagogue! It is true that the old writers, who are our only authority for the facts of Shakspeare's early life—Rowe, for instance, and Dowdall, who speaks on the authority of the octogenarian clerk at Stratford—tell us that he was put as apprentice to his father's trade; but what of that? It is much better for our purpose to make him "usher" at the Grammar School, and as all records of the school have perished there is not much danger in so doing. It is true that there never seems to have been an "usher" at the school, but, again, what of that? As Canon Beeching very truly writes in the same lecture (p. 45), "of Shakespeare's education outside the walls of the Stratford Grammar School, *every one's imagination will furnish him with a better account than I can pretend to give*." That is well said, and it is on this excellent principle that the critics and biographers have consistently acted. They have given free scope to their "imagination," with the result that we have now very full and very delightful biographies of "Shakespeare," which leave nothing to be desired, except, indeed, veracity.

“that it was written between 1589 and 1592.” It is founded both on the *Amphitruo* and the *Menacchmi* of Plautus. “At that date there were no known English translations of those plays in existence, for Warner’s version of the *Menacchmi* did not appear till 1595.” But Warner says in his preface that he had shown his translation in manuscript “for the use and delight of his private friends, who, in Plautus’s own words, are not able to understand them.” Upon this Canon Beeching quietly informs us, without a *scintilla* of evidence to go upon, but as though it were an ascertained and unquestionable fact, that “there was a translation available in manuscript” for Shakspeare of Stratford! Thus is this man’s biography concocted!

But, be that as it may, we have the authority of Mr. Churton Collins for saying that “of his [Shakespeare’s] familiarity with Plautus [i.e. in the original] there can be no question.” And, in conclusion upon this point, I am of the same opinion still, viz. that Shakspeare could not possibly have acquired all the classical knowledge and culture possessed by the author of the *Plays* and *Poems* during his few years at the Stratford Free Grammar School.

We come now to (6) “*But allowing that an industrious boy could get a knowledge of Latin at Stratford, he would learn nothing else.*” I will not

quarrel with this statement either. I think it expresses the truth, and I do not understand Canon Beeching to say that he seriously disputes it. But then, says he, many years elapsed between the time when Shakspeare left school and the date of his first publications. Well, we know something about the life he led at Stratford till he was somewhere about the age of twenty-three, and it certainly is not suggestive of learning and culture. But, again says the Canon, "Shakespeare came to London, probably, in 1585." I do not think there is any such probability. Mr. Lee says (p. 28) that it was "doubtless . . . during 1586," and I think Mr. Lee's adverb is as little justified as Canon Beeching's. In 1586 the London theatres were closed on account of the plague, as the Canon himself observes (p. 56). In 1587 John Shakspeare, "being at that time in prison for debt," had to make an arrangement with the mortgagee of the Asbies property, and William Shakspeare's concurrence seems to have been required. "I believe," writes Mr. Fleay (*Life*, p. 95), "that immediately after this, in 1587, Shakespeare left Stratford either with or in order to join Lord Leicester's Company." And what did he do in London? Well, we have the horse-holding story (perhaps as well attested as most other facts in the life of Shakspeare), and the well-known statement that he entered the theatres as "a serviture," i.e.

“call-boy,” probably, or, it may be, “super.” “As call-boy and prompter’s assistant,” says Canon Beeching (p. 57), he served a “long apprenticeship.” Moreover, the actor’s art is not exactly learnt in a day—except, of course, by amateurs! But here, it seems, was Shakspeare’s chance. “Actors’ tradition, coming through Beeston from Augustine Phillips, who was in Shakespeare’s own company, tells us that Shakespeare acted ‘exceedingly well.’ Now it is the distinguishing character of a good actor that he has a keen eye for manners. Nothing of this sort, that he sees, escapes him; and what he sees he can imitate” (p. 14). Now what is this “Actors’ tradition”? It is Aubrey again! Now Aubrey, it is true, makes a general reference to Beeston, which would seem to imply that he derived such information as he had about Shakspeare from that old seventeenth-century actor, but, so far as I know, there is nothing to show that Beeston pronounced this encomium on Shakspeare’s acting (if, indeed, he ever *did* pronounce it) on the authority of Augustine Phillips. But what does the learned Farmer say on this point? “Shakespeare most certainly went to London and commenced actor through necessity, not natural inclination. Nor have we any reason to suppose that he did act *exceedingly well*. Rowe tells us from the information of Betterton, who was inquisitive into this point, and had

very early opportunities of inquiry from Sir W. Davenant, that he was *no extraordinary Actor*; and that the top of his performance was the ghost in his own Hamlet." He then quotes Lodge's *Wits Miserie* to show that "even that *chef-d'œuvre* did not please." Rowe's words are: "His name is printed, as the custom was in those times, amongst those of the other Players, before some old Plays, but without any particular account of what sort of parts he us'd to play; and tho' I have inquir'd, I could never meet with any further account of him this way, than that the top of his performance was the ghost in Hamlet."

This seems to throw cold water on Canon Beeching's theory that Shakspeare derived all the culture necessary for the author of *Venus and Adonis*, the *Sonnets*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and the rest, behind the footlights. As to what sort of men the Players of that day really were I would beg to refer the reader to my book (see pp. 75, 83 note, 175, etc.). Canon Beeching has himself written, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, Shakspeare "belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading" (and see his book at p. 70). Nevertheless, he thinks that a few years on the stage were quite sufficient to give the "Stratford rustic," turned Player, all that was necessary to qualify him as "Shakespeare."

As to *Venus and Adonis*, why should it be thought

extraordinary that a young man of Shakspeare's antecedents should have written it? "Here," says the Canon, "we have a close parallel in Shakespeare's fellow-countryman Drayton, whom I have already called in evidence. He was born the year before Shakespeare, and, like him, had no learning beyond what a schoolmaster could afford. In 1594, the year after *Venus and Adonis*, he produced a volume of sonnets, which are as *précieux* as anything in Shakespeare's poem" (p. 15). The Canon then quotes one of these sonnets, and a very charming one it is, affording additional proof, if proof were needed, that other contemporary writers besides Shakespeare could produce poetry of the highest class, though it is not up to the level of that other magnificent sonnet of Drayton's, "Since there's no help come let us kiss and part," etc., nor yet of that grand martial lyric the "Ballad of Agincourt." But does Canon Beeching really imagine that Drayton's case is "parallel" with that of Shakspeare, supposing that the latter was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*? Let us see. Drayton, says the Canon (p. 10), was "another Warwickshire butcher's son." Who says so? Aubrey again! Thus, according to the "roving maggoty-pated man," there were *three* distinguished Warwickshire butchers' sons, two of whom were in Stratford, viz. Shakspeare and that other butcher's son, his



“coetanean,” who died young, and, thirdly, Michael Drayton. Well, in Shakspeare’s case we have, certainly, the corroboration of the octogenarian clerk of Stratford who told Dowdall (1693) that Shakspeare “was formerly in this towne bound apprentice to a butcher”—the butcher being generally supposed to have been his own father, John Shakspeare ; but what warrant Master Aubrey had for making Drayton a butcher’s son also I cannot conceive. His mind seems to have been running on butchers. As to Drayton, we are told in the *General Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Alexander Chalmers, that “His family was ancient, and originally descended from the town of Drayton in Leicestershire, which gave name to his progenitors, as a learned antiquary of his acquaintance has recorded ; but his parents removing into Warwickshire our poet was born there. When he was but ten years of age he seems to have been page to some person of honour. He was some time a student in the University of Oxford, though we do not find that he took any degree there.” To the same effect writes Mr. Gosse. “At the age of ten he was sent as page into some great family, and a little later he is supposed to have studied for some time at Oxford.” We have it on Drayton’s own authority that he was “nobly bred” and “well ally’d,” so his father would appear to have been a very distinguished

“butcher” indeed! It seems highly probable that he was attached to the household of Sir Henry Goodere, of Powlesworth, to whom he acknowledges his indebtedness for the most part of his education. We are told, by the way, that Drayton, according to the custom of the time, “wrote numerous commendatory verses” to contemporaries, a thing which “Shakespeare,” unfortunately, never did—under that name at any rate! Drayton evidently had friends in the highest ranks. He writes dedicatory epistles or poems to the Countess of Bedford; to the Lady Jane Devereux, of Merivale, to whose “boundless hospitality” he pays a high tribute; to Lady Anne Harrington; to Lucy, daughter of Sir John Harrington; and to many others. Harken unto the learned Mrs. Stopes. “It would have been comforting to us to have had as much authoritative autobiography of Shakespeare as we have of Michael Drayton. The latter was very communicative about himself, he had many friends and patrons, he showered dedications among these broadcast, and from the dedications we learn much about his circumstances and ambitions. . . . Though no definite record is preserved, it is quite possible that Goodere sent him to the University. Sir Aston Cokaine in his *Remedy for Love*, 1658, refers to the poet as ‘my old friend Drayton,’ a phrase which implies some degree of intimacy,

and speaking of the colleges which had produced poets, he says in his poem :—

‘Oxford, our other Academy, you  
Full worthy must acknowledge of your view :  
Here smooth-tongued Drayton was inspired by  
Mnemosyne’s manifold Projenie.’”<sup>1</sup>

In the face of all this what warrant has Canon Beeching for saying of Drayton that he “had no learning beyond what a schoolmaster could afford”? Of Shakspeare’s early life we know little, and yet a great deal too much. Of Drayton’s early life we know little, indeed, but nothing that forbids us to believe—nay, much that compels us to believe—that it was spent in an atmosphere of culture and refinement. What “parallel” is there here? The “proper goodly page,” in the household of Sir Henry Goodere, “nobly bred and well ally’d,” with his “mild Tutor,” and (as seems highly probable) with his University education—how can *his* early life be compared (except, indeed, to his infinite advantage) with that of the young “Stratford rustic,” “much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits” for (Canon Beeching, at any rate, accepts the poaching

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare’s Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 188. Meres, also, seems to have had a personal knowledge of and affection for Drayton, for he says of him “*quem toties honoris et amoris causa nomino.*” In his epistle to Reynolds, “Of Poets and Poetry,” Drayton boasts of his friendship with “the two Beaumonts . . . my dear companions.”

story), "oft whipt and sometimes imprisoned," and "fallen into ill company," who deserted his wife and young children in order to rise on stepping-stones of horse-holder and call-boy to the position of an actor whose "top performance was the ghost in *Hamlet*"?

It may, of course, be said that all these traditions as to the young Shakspeare are not necessarily historical. Granted; but let the reader take the whole life so far as we know it at all—as the "ancient witnesses" have revealed it to us; as Rowe has handed it down; as Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee have told the story, working on the best evidence in their possession; and then consider what analogy he is justified in assuming between the circumstances of Drayton's early training and that of William Shakspeare of Stratford. But the fact is that there is no "parallel" case to that of Shakspeare in the world's history—that is, supposing Shakspeare and "Shakespeare" are one.

Canon Beeching, by the way, is commendably prudent in not going too closely into the matter of dates. There is nothing extraordinary, he thinks, in the (supposed) fact that Shakspeare of Stratford should compose that wonderful, highly cultured, highly polished, and scholarly poem of *Venus and Adonis*, because it was published, "not in the twentieth, but at the end of the six-

teenth century," in the spacious days, "when the Spirit of Literature was abroad in England," and when there were still grammar-schools to teach Latin classics. Moreover, Shakespeare was "twenty-nine when he printed his poem." Yes, Shakspeare was twenty-nine in 1593, when *Venus and Adonis* was first "printed," but the author calls it "the first heir of my invention," and, therefore, it must have been composed a very considerable time before that year. And how about *Love's Labour's Lost*? In the form in which we now know it, says Canon Beeching, it shows evidence of much correction and revision. That may be granted as extremely probable. But when was it originally composed? "The date of the original production," writes Mr. Fleay (*Life*, p. 202), "cannot well be put later than 1589," and we have this and other high authority for saying that it must have been composed in 1588, i.e. as I have shown, in the year after Shakspeare, in all probability, came to town a penniless fugitive to seek employment as a "servitude" in a London theatre, in order to "keep the wolf from the door"!

Canon Beeching sees nothing in the least extraordinary in all this. Well, well; *quot homines tot sententiae!*

What is the next of my supposed arguments? It is "(7) *There is no contemporary evidence*

*identifying the player with the author of the plays and poems.*" But I have not said this. I have not said that there is *no* evidence. To do so would be absurd. If Shakspeare of Stratford did not write the plays and poems, then, obviously, "Shakespeare" was used as a *nom de plume*, or, if you will, "a mask name," by somebody who did not wish to reveal his identity. Naturally in that case many persons would imagine that the player was the author. Some, indeed, would see through it, and roundly accuse the player of putting forth the works of others as his own. To such he would be a "Poet-ape,"<sup>1</sup> or "an upstart crow," beautified with the feathers of other writers. Others would simply accept the ostensible as the real author. My belief is that, in those days, the general public did not care a twopenny button-top who wrote the plays. As Henslowe's *Diary* conclusively proves, plays, at that date, were constantly written by two, three, four, or even five authors in collaboration, and nobody, outside a very small circle, troubled his head as to who the dramatist or dramatists might be. There

<sup>1</sup> Canon Beeching writes: "I may also, perhaps, point out to Mr. Greenwood that whether Jonson's epigram on *Poet-ape* refers to Shakespeare or not—a point that cannot be determined—the word 'Poet-ape' means, and can only mean, 'Poet-player.'" If by that expression the Canon means "a player who pretends to be a poet," I should say that that is too obvious to require to be pointed out. See the epigram quoted by me at p. 455, and the Prologue to the *Poetaster* quoted at p. 456.

was no *Daily Mail* then, and no "dramatic critics"—no Press to inquire into matters of authorship, or to write columns on "The Great Unknown." I repeat there were, of course, some, and there were probably many, who accepted Shakspeare the player, whose name was (in his later days at any rate) so commonly written Shakespeare (though, as it seems, not by himself), as the author of the plays put forth in that name. I repeat, it would be absurd to say that there is *no* contemporary evidence identifying the player with the author. The question is, Is the evidence so strong and so trustworthy as to outweigh all the arguments for the negative case? Can we be sure that those contemporary writers who use expressions which seem to identify the player with the poet really believed in that identity, or, if they believed in it, that they were not themselves deceived? What I actually say in my book on this point is as follows: "What we require is evidence to establish the identity of the player with the poet and dramatist; <sup>1</sup> to prove that the player was the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. *That* is the proposition to be established and *that* the allusions fail, as it appears to me, to prove. At any rate, they do not disprove the theory that the true authorship was hidden under

<sup>1</sup> Observe, to "establish the identity"—not the fact that some contemporaries believed in it.

a pseudonym" (see chapter XI., *Shakespeare Allusions and Illusions*, p. 307).

But Canon Beeching calls witnesses to show (what, as I have said, I do not deny) that there is *some* contemporary evidence suggesting that the player was identical with the poet. Let us then examine them. No doubt they are the best that can be produced. Let us see what weight ought to be attached to any evidence that they can give.

The first is Richard Field, who, says Canon Beeching, "published the *Venus and Adonis*, and was a native of Stratford." He further says (p. 17), "Mr. Greenwood acknowledges this," but, nevertheless, I fear I cannot quite agree. It is true that Richard Field printed *Venus and Adonis* (as I say at p. 62 note), but the publisher, I apprehend, was John Harrison. Like the *Lucrece*, it was "to be sold at the signe of the white Greyhound in Paules Church-yard," where Harrison carried on business. Field's printing office was at Ludgate. I am aware, of course, that on April 18, 1593, "Richard Field entered for his copie under the handes of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Master Warden Stirrop, a booke intituled *Venus and Adonis*" (*Arber. Transcripts*, II, 631), and it was not till June 25, 1594, that he actually assigned his copy in this work, "in open court," to Master John Harri-



son senior, but I believe it is quite correct to say that the real publisher was Harrison, for whom Field printed two subsequent editions, and the first edition of *Lucrece*.<sup>1</sup> I think, then, the strong probability is that the publisher, John Harrison senior, a well-known member of the Stationers' Company, of the White Greyhound in St. Paul's Churchyard, was the man who, in the natural course of things, employed Field to print the work. There is really no reason to suppose that "Shakespeare" had anything whatever to do with it.<sup>2</sup>

Canon Beeching goes on to dispute, with no little scorn, my statement that "there is absolutely nothing to show that Field had any acquaintance with, or any knowledge of, Shakspeare,"

<sup>1</sup> As Mr. H. R. Tedder puts it, in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, "he [Field] printed three editions of *Venus and Adonis* and the first of *Lucrece* for John Harrison." Field himself was made free of the Stationers' Company on February 6, 1586-7, but from an entry in the Registers on June 4, 1599, he seems to have been at that time among the unprivileged printers (see *Arber. Trans.*, III, 678).

<sup>2</sup> If Field and the author were close friends, as some have assumed, one would hardly have expected to find Field parting with his copyright; rather, we should have expected to find him in possession of the copyright of *Lucrece* also. The Baconians, however, maintain that Richard Field *was* a friend of "Shakespeare's," for, in the autumn of 1592, Francis Bacon rode to Twickenham Park in company with his friends, Richard Cecil, Robert Gosnold, and Richard Field! (Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of Lord Bacon's Life*, p. 56). Was this Richard Field the printer and stationer? I do not profess to know.

i.e. William Shakspeare of Stratford. Why, says Canon Beeching, "Richard Field, who was of Shakespeare's own age, did not leave Stratford till he was fifteen; and their fathers were acquainted, for John Shakespeare, when Henry Field died, attested the inventory of his goods and chattels." What says T. Payne Collier on this matter? "The printer of the earliest impressions of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* was Richard Field . . . and it has been conjectured that Shakespeare had been induced to employ him because he, or his family, came from Stratford-on-Avon. In 1592 the father of our great dramatist was appointed, with two others, to value the goods of a person of the name of 'Henry Fielde, of Stratford, tanner,' and he may possibly have been the father of Richard Field, the printer" (*Annals of the Stage*, Vol. III, 439). I am quite aware that what Collier thought only a possibility is now supposed to be proved, but the identity of Henry Field, of whose goods an inventory was taken, with the father of Richard Field, does not seem to have been conclusively shown. But even if it be so, what does the evidence amount to? In 1587 Shakspeare had left Stratford for London. In 1592 his father, with two others, is employed in the way of business, to value the goods of Henry Field, assumed to be the father of Richard Field,

who seems to have gone to London, as a boy of fifteen, some eight years before Shakspeare left his home. And this is cited as though it were conclusive evidence that William Shakspeare was personally acquainted with Richard Field! Of course, if Shakespeare, who dedicated the first heir of his invention to the great Earl of Southampton, was, in truth, Shakspeare of Stratford, it is, perhaps, probable that he knew Field, who printed the poem for his publisher Harrison; but that is just the point at issue. On full consideration of the circumstances, therefore, it seems to me that I am amply justified in saying that there is no evidence whatever showing any personal acquaintance between Shakspeare and Richard Field; for to pray in aid the dedication of the poem for that purpose is, of course, merely to reason in a circle.<sup>1</sup>

A word more as to this Richard Field. He printed three editions of *Venus and Adonis* for Harrison, and the first edition (and only the first) of the *Lucrece*, for the same publisher. Not one of the quarto plays came from Field's press. Yet

<sup>1</sup> At page 48 Canon Beeching speaks of Richard Field as Shakespeare's "school friend." This is a characteristic illustration of the manner in which Stratfordian biography is written. There is not a tittle of evidence to show that Field was at school with Shakspeare, or at all, for the matter of that. But he *might have been*, therefore *he was*!

it seems odd, if Shakspere was really such a great friend of Field's, that as actor-manager and rising dramatist he did not employ his friend to print for him ! If it be said that he had sold his plays to "the Company," his influence, nevertheless, would surely have been sufficient to secure the printing for his friend had he so desired ! Close friendship between the two men has been quietly assumed by modern Stratfordian critics on the strength of Field having been a native of Stratford. It has been suggested that, doubtless, Shakspere went to Field for help and assistance when he first came to town. Did Field help him to get the position of call-boy, I wonder ? If so, it is a pity he could not do rather better than this for his friend ; pity too that neither Canon Beeching's favourite Aubrey, nor Rowe, nor any of the "ancient witnesses," record the fact ! Mrs. Stopes, however, goes one better than all. She assumes that Shakspere acquired his learning, classical and other, including his knowledge of Giordano Bruno, *inter alia*, by assiduous reading at Vautrollier's shop where Field had been an apprentice and to the control of which he succeeded by marrying either Vautrollier's daughter or widow, for as to this the evidence is conflicting (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, pp. 8 and 9). This in an orthodox Stratfordian is considered quite sane

and reasonable. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

The next witness cited is the author of the *Return from Parnassus*. Now I have dealt with that curious old play at considerable length in my book (see p. 319 *et seq.*); I have shown, amongst other things, how the "scholar" author who wrote it pours scorn and ridicule upon the players in the persons of Kempe and Burbage, who are represented as ignorant, conceited, half-educated vulgarians, "rude grooms," as Greene called them, who speak of "that writer *Metamorphosis*," under the impression that he was a Latin author, just as they speak of that writer *Ovid*"!<sup>1</sup> These buffoons are, certainly, made to talk of "our fellow Shakespeare" in such a way as to show that the author of the play ascribed to them the belief that player Shakspere was also an author. I fully admit this in my book, where I write, in a passage which Canon Beeching has *not* quoted, "In fact, the only thing of real importance in these allusions is this, that the Cam-

<sup>1</sup> I further call attention to the feud which existed in those days between the scholars and the players, and ask the reader to appreciate the fact that the scholar-playwright is satirizing the players. See the quotation from Gifford's *Memoir of Ben Jonson* at p. 324. Gifford has shown, and I have endeavoured to make clear, how absurd it is to cite this passage as to "our fellow Shakespeare" as though it bore testimony to Shakespeare's "confessed supremacy" at the time (see p. 322).

bridge dramatist makes Kempe and Burbage speak of 'our fellow Shakespeare' as an author." Whether the dramatist himself believed this also we do not know. Possibly he did, but very possibly he did not. I repeat, the anonymous scholar who wrote these old plays had a supreme contempt for the players, and expresses it with great bitterness. The commendation of player Shakespeare which he puts into the mouth of Burbage was, I suspect, received with much laughter by the Cambridge scholars and students assembled. It would be altogether to misunderstand the satire if we were to take it that the belief attributed to the supposed players on the stage was also necessarily the belief of the author or of his cultivated audience. But we really know nothing of the scholar author, or what means he had of knowing the facts of the case.

The next witness is John Davies of Hereford. I have cited this writer's epigram, referred to by Canon Beeching, at page 335 of my book, where I admit that "John Davies of Hereford is more to the point, for he writes lines to 'our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare,'" etc. Now as Terence was a writer of comedies, it would certainly seem that John Davies looked upon "Mr. Will Shake-speare," whom he speaks of as a player, as a writer of comedies also. This must be conceded, and I have made no attempt

to deny it. The epigram is a curious one. Davies, addressing "good *Will*," informs him that according to some, if he, "*Will*" to wit, had "not played some kingly parts in sport," he had been "a companion for a *King*," and been "a *King* among the meaner sort." The first "*King*" is thrown into italics, which is rather curious. Old writers sometimes put all their important nouns into italics, but this is not the explanation here, because, in the first six lines of the epigram, "*Will*" and the first "*King*" (but not the second) are alone italicized. It has been suggested that Davies is alluding to somebody of the name of "King," or to the "King's Players," or to King James; or he may have had Horace's line in his mind, "*At pueri ludentes Rex eris aiunt*," which seems to me very probable. In any case, even if "Mr. Will Shake-speare" had not disqualified himself to be "a companion for a *King*," he would only have been "a *King among the meaner sort*," which does not seem to place him very high in Davies's estimation, though in the four last lines he praises him for having "no rayling, but a raigning Wit," concluding thus—

*"And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;  
So to increase their Stocke which they do keepe."*

What the real meaning of all this is I honestly confess that I do not know, and the commentators

shed no light on the matter. John Davies, as everybody knows, was a writing-master and a voluminous writer of poetry which few people have the patience to read, though it contains much interesting matter. Let it be admitted, then, that John Davies of Hereford, to all outward appearance, thought that "Mr. Will Shake-speare, our English Terence," was the player whose name was occasionally so written. So far as I know that has never been denied. *Valeat quantum*. But is it not rather strange that he should have looked upon the player (if in truth and in fact he did so look upon him) as a writer of comedies only? And that, too, in 1611 or thereabouts, when William Shakspeare, at the age of forty-seven, was just seeking retirement in the congenial society of the small tradesmen of Stratford! John Davies does not seem to have been struck by such trifles as *Hamlet*, and *Lear*, and *Othello*! Perhaps he did not know very much about the matter. Calligraphy was more in his line. If only he could have given Shakspeare a few lessons!<sup>1</sup>

The next witness whom Canon Beeching puts into the box is that great Earl to whom player Shakspeare, with unprecedented and unparalleled

<sup>1</sup> Davies of Hereford is generally supposed to have been the "scribbler" on the outside of the Northumberland Manuscript, but this is not the place to dilate upon that theme, tempting as the subject undoubtedly is.



audacity, is supposed to have dedicated the first heir of his invention in somewhat familiar terms.<sup>1</sup> I have denied that there is a scrap of evidence showing that Shakspeare the actor was intimate with or patronized by the Earl. Canon Beeching, however, professes to be able to produce that scrap. What is it? Why, Nicholas Rowe tells us that somebody told him that Sir William D'Avenant told somebody else "that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him ["Shakespeare" or "Shakspeare"—which you please] a thousand pounds, to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to." This, Rowe says, is an "instance so singular in the magnificence of this Patron" that he "would not have ventured to have inserted" it if he had not

<sup>1</sup> Canon Beeching, in the *Stratford Town Shakespeare*, adverting to the theory that the earlier sonnets were addressed to Southampton not as an adored friend but merely as a patron, remarks: "If it is remembered that Shakespeare's patron, Lord Southampton, was one of the greatest peers in England at a time when all social degrees, even that between peer and gentleman, were very clearly marked, and that Shakespeare belonged to a profession which, by public opinion, was held to be degrading, it will hardly need saying that such addresses from a player, however fashionable, to a patron, however complaisant, were simply impossible." But the fact is that from player to peer they were "simply impossible" in any case; and so I venture to think is this dedication. He that wrote it, with the "*vilia miretur vulgus*" motto, was no player (see my book, p. 57). As to the Sonnets, that enigma will never be solved so long as the hopeless attempt is made to adapt them to the life of William Shakspeare of Stratford.

been told that D'Avenant said so. "This tradition," says Canon Beeching, "came to Rowe on the authority of Sir William Davenant." But did Rowe get the story from D'Avenant? Scarcely, for D'Avenant died some five years before Rowe was born. As for Shakspeare, he had been dead nearly one hundred years before Rowe essayed to write a memoir of him. And what *was* this "purchase"? I should like to know. Not the purchase of New Place, which Shakspeare bought in 1597 for £60. But the story is evidently just a bit of Stratfordian mythology. And it is this piece of hopeless "hearsay," this fifth-hand fable, that Canon Beeching parades as "evidence" (save the mark!) that player Shakspeare was intimate with the great Earl and patronized by him! I repeat there is "not a scrap of *evidence*" to that effect."<sup>1</sup>

These, then, are Canon Beeching's four witnesses, called to establish the identity of the player

<sup>1</sup> At the same time, although we have not any evidence for it, I would not deny that it is probable enough that Southampton may have given a munificent gift to "Shakespeare," the author of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, just as Essex, in 1595, gave Bacon some land which he sold for £1800. "The story," says Canon Beeching with reference to Rowe's "tall tale," "has no parallel that I know of." But this story of Essex and Bacon is quite "parallel" except in the position of the donee, and may, indeed, have given rise to the Shakspeare-Southampton myth. *That* story, says Mr. Bompas, "is not reconcilable with the facts of Shakspeare's life" (see the *Problem of the Shakespeare Plays*, p. 69).

with the author of the plays. I have shown that two of them, viz. Richard Field and the Earl of Southampton, have no evidentiary value at all; and I submit that what the players are made to say by the unknown author of the *Return from Parnassus* gives very little help indeed towards proving the proposition. John Davies of Hereford is certainly the Canon's best card, but I do not think it is good enough to win the game for him. Let it not be forgotten that what those of the "orthodox" faith have to do is (I say it again) to establish the identity of the player with the poet; not merely to show (what so far as I know nobody has ever denied) that some contemporary writers believed in that identity. The strange thing to my mind is that there is not much more evidence of such belief.<sup>1</sup>

Shakspeare was buried, as we are told, in the church at Stratford, and there somebody, at some time—nobody knows who or when—set up a monu-

<sup>1</sup> Let the reader set against these extremely unconvincing witnesses such pregnant negatives as that of Manningham's diary, 1601 (see my book at p. 340), or the petition of Cuthbert and Winifrid Burbage, in 1635, to the Earl of Pembroke, the survivor of the "incomparable pair" (p. 339). Is it not a suggestive fact that the proprietors of the theatres which had been made famous by the production of the Shakespearean plays, should, twelve years after the publication of the Great Folio (with the "Swan of Avon" lines) describe the illustrious author of the dramas (?) merely as a "man-player" and a "deserving man"! Why was he not "the great poet and dramatist"?

ment with an inscription telling the "passenger" that "Shakspeare" had been placed within that monument, which, unless the monument conceals some unsuspected mortal remains, is not exactly veracious; and with some Latin verses which seem singularly inappropriate. However, the inference certainly is that those who erected the monument<sup>1</sup> believed, or at any rate intended others to believe, that Shakspeare of Stratford was the Shakespeare of immortality. In his name, under the form "Shakespeare" or "Shake-speare," had the *Plays* (such of them as had been published, and not published anonymously) been put forth. Nay, in that name, or under those initials, had many other plays been published which nobody now believes to be the work of "Shakespeare." This is worth noting, because it shows that the publishers of these "spurious" plays knew very well that they might use this name without any fear of interference on the part of Shakspeare, or anybody else. Of what other contemporary author can this be said?

It seems that "Shakespeare" was unique in this respect. But these spurious plays, doubtless, were accepted as the works of Shakespeare, nobody taking the trouble to inquire, and the general

<sup>1</sup> Not Shakspeare's "fellow-townsmen," as one of Mr. Lee's comments in *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century* would seem to imply. See on this point and on the inscription generally a letter signed "G. Krueger" (of Berlin) in *N. and Q.*, October 31st, 1908.

public not caring two straws, whether they were really Shakespeare's or no. Then, seven years after Shakspeare's death, came the Folio, and Jonson's lines, and so it seemed to be settled for all time that Shakspeare, whose gravestone in the chancel (for at least we are told that he lies under it) imprecates a curse against any one who shall move his bones, was the immortal poet and dramatist. And for nearly a hundred years nobody thought of making any serious inquiry into the life of this man. "That almost a century should have elapsed," writes Malone (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 10), "from the time of his death, without a single attempt having been made to discover any circumstance which could throw a light on the history of his private life, or literary career ; that, when the attempt was made, it should have been so imperfectly executed by the very ingenious and elegant dramatist who undertook the task ; and that for a period of eighty years afterwards, during which this 'god of our idolatry' ranked as high among us as any poet ever did in any country, all the editors of his works, and each succeeding English biographer, should have been contented with Mr. Rowe's meagre and imperfect narrative, are circumstances which cannot be contemplated without astonishment."

Perhaps if no "attempt" had been made "to throw a light on the history of his private life and literary career," if the dry bones of Shakespearean

biography had been left undisturbed, on the principle of letting sleeping dogs lie, the searchlight of criticism would never have discovered so many grave reasons for seriously doubting the time-honoured tradition of authorship.

My *eighth* supposed argument refers to Shakspeare's handwriting, and I have already dealt with it, so I now pass on to *No. 9*, which, in Canon Beeching's book, stands as follows: "There is not a letter, not a note, not a scrap of writing from the pen of Shakspeare which has come down to us except five signatures." It is true that I state this well-known fact, and in these words, but if the reader will do me the honour to refer to my book (p. 17), he will find that I do not, as Canon Beeching's comments would lead him to believe, use it as an important fact on the question of authorship, as though the case of Shakspeare (or Shakespeare) were unique in this particular. I merely refer to it in connexion with the dispute as to the spelling of the name. The passage quoted by Canon Beeching continues: "All these five signatures appear to differ. Almost illegible as they must have been when written, except to expert decipherers of hieroglyphics, they are doubly so now on account of the fading of the ink. Modern biographers, therefore, reading through the spectacles of their own prepossessions, have made valiant attempts

to read the name 'Shakespeare'—the literary name—in one or two instances. There is, however, no reasonable doubt that the earlier and less prejudiced critics, who had no particular theory to support or combat in this matter, were correct in reading 'Shakspere.'” I was not considering the absence of Shakespearean manuscripts, as Canon Beeching suggests. Nevertheless, I would say here that, seeing we have specimens of the writing of such men as Spenser (*pace* Mr. Lee), and Ben Jonson, and Joshua Sylvester, and other poets of the time, it does seem a remarkable fact that nothing of Shakspere's has been preserved beyond these five signatures, if Shakspere was indeed recognized by his contemporaries as the greatest poet of the age. But I am quite content to leave this matter as I have left it in my book. One comment of Canon Beeching's, however, I will briefly notice. He says: “Still, undoubtedly there may have been something *complexional* in Shakespeare's silence. Every man has his humour, and all men are not given to letter-writing. An evidence of this *idiosyncrasy* may be found in the absence of the commendatory lines on other poets of which the Elizabethan Age had its share, *though the fashion set in later.*”<sup>1</sup> I venture to say that this “fashion set in” vigorously in Elizabethan times,

<sup>1</sup> The italics in this quotation are mine.

and most certainly in those times it was the constant practice of poets to write commendatory lines to well-known and distinguished persons, poets or not. Few better examples of this "fashion" can be found than the case of Michael Drayton, in which Canon Beeching so vainly seeks to find a parallel to that of Shakspeare.

The *tenth argument* attributed to me by Canon Beeching also has reference to the fact that not a scrap of writing from Shakespeare's pen has come down to us revealing himself, as other poets of the age have revealed themselves, in a personal light, unless, indeed, the enigmatic sonnets are to be looked upon as an exception. I write (p. 200): "But if Shakspeare was indeed Shakespeare, it does seem unaccountable that he should have written no lines to friends or patrons, no elegies on famous men or women of his day, no lyrics other than those, or some of those, which appear in the dramas, no epigrams, no epitaphs, no epithalamiums." I would respectfully refer the reader to the whole passage. I have reread it, and the argument appears to me to be sound. I compare the practice of other poets generally, and that of Jonson in particular. Canon Beeching takes my instances, of the things some of which Shakspeare might have been expected to have written, not collectively but separately and *singillatim*. He says Lyly wrote no "epigrams";



Kyd no "epithalamiums"; Marston no "elegies." Such a method of argument seems to me to merit no reply. But he is particularly annoyed at my comparing Shakspeare with Jonson. "How thoughtless is this constant comparison of Shakespeare with Jonson! . . . Mr. Greenwood does not seem to have grasped the elementary fact about Jonson, that in most things he did he was exceptional in his age." But why do I frequently institute this comparison between the lives and habits of these two men? No reader of my book needs to be told. He has only to turn to page 1, where I quote Mr. Lee's remarkable pronouncement to the effect that "Patient investigation, which has been in progress for more than two hundred years, has brought together a mass of biographical detail [in Shakspeare's case] which far exceeds that accessible in the case of any poet contemporary with Shakespeare." This, as I point out, must mean, if it means anything at all, that we know more about the life of Shakspeare of Stratford than we know about that of any poet contemporary with him. Well, the best method of bringing this singularly audacious statement to the test is to compare what we know about Shakspeare with what we know about Jonson. I have done so, and see no reason to apologize for so doing. Next, please!

*The next supposed argument (No. 11) consists*

merely in a comment which I make upon the fact that Jonson's death "was greeted with a chorus of elegiac and panegyrical verses, poured forth by the best poets of the moment," as the late Mr. J. A. Symonds wrote. "How different," I add, "was the case of Shakespeare!" To class this as one of the main "arguments" in support of my case seems to me to display a want of the sense of proportion on the part of the learned Canon. It is, however, I venture to think, a fact in the case which is well worthy of consideration.

*The attributed arguments (12) and (13) are, to adopt Canon Beeching's headings (which, it must be remembered, are his own words and not mine), first, "Ben Jonson's mysterious relations with the Folio of Shakespeare's plays"; and, secondly, "Jonson's commendatory poem."* As they both deal with Jonson's cryptic utterances I will take them both together, commencing with *No. 13*. As to this, Canon Beeching, once more indulging in the *tu quoque* style of argument, writes: "Mr. Greenwood gives us one of the finest exhibitions of what he calls 'bluff' that I have ever witnessed." In support of this he quotes the expression of my own personal conviction that "had it not been for the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623 . . . I verily believe that the Stratfordian hypothesis would long ago have been given up as an exploded myth, or, rather,

would never have obtained foothold at all." As the Canon's sacred calling probably will not allow him to take a hand in the profane game of "poker," he may well be excused for having hazy ideas of the meaning of the expression "bluff," and, therefore, he is quite welcome to apply it, if he chooses, with reference to an expression of personal belief. He cannot, however, be absolved from the duty of not misrepresenting an author whose work he has taken it upon himself to criticize. But that duty, unfortunately, appears to be one of very imperfect obligation with him. I devote many pages to a careful consideration of Jonson's utterances, including, of course, the celebrated poem prefixed to the First Folio. This is how the Canon sums up my observations upon it (p. 26). "In regard to the whole poem, he says that it is a 'riddle' and that 'by the Stratfordians it has to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away.'" "This is pretty good," comments the Canon, "from the author of the comment on the 'Swan of Avon'!" Canon Beeching here discreetly refrains from giving the reference to the page of my book from which he quotes, and, as the reader can hardly be expected to look all through it for the passage in question, he will, of course, accept my critic's statement as canonically accurate. If, however, he will turn to page 498 of my book, he will

discover that his confidence has been misplaced. There he will find that I say (it is just at the end of chapter xv.), "I here leave the Jonsonian riddle." That last word, "riddle," is applied, as the most cursory reader will see, not only to the poem in question, but to all Jonson's various utterances with regard to "Shakespeare," including the well-known passage in the "Discoveries," the words recorded by Drummond, and others—passages which, as every competent critic, orthodox or heretic, must recognize, are, in some respects, extremely difficult to reconcile and to explain. And do I say "in regard to the whole poem" that "by the Stratfordians it has to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously, explained away"? No, I do not, as the Canon must have very well known, because he has read the words, and these are they: "'Small Latin and less Greek' . . . may be true enough of the 'Stratford rustic,' but is found to be entirely inappropriate to the author of the *Plays* and *Poems*. It has therefore to be ingeniously, if not ingenuously explained away." It is obvious, therefore, that I was referring to those modern Shakespearean critics, who, like the late Professor Churton Collins, have found irresistible evidence of a cultured and learned Shakespeare in "the works themselves," and are therefore under the necessity of explaining the words "small Latin and less

Greek" as importing "much Latin and perhaps a little Greek"! Yet Canon Beeching thinks it consistent with fair criticism to tell his readers (while suppressing all reference to the passage) that I use these words "in regard to the whole poem"!

As to the poem itself, there are, undoubtedly, many things in it which it is extremely difficult to explain and to reconcile with other Jonsonian utterances. But I have gone at length into this matter in my chapter on "Jonson, Shakespeare, Shakspere, and Bacon," and if the reader cares to read that chapter for himself, rather than to view it through the distorting medium of Canon Beeching's "theological telescope," he will, at any rate, know the truth with regard to my arguments, suggestions, and opinions.

I have suggested, as others have suggested before me, that it is quite possible that Jonson knew, but was engaged not to reveal, the true facts as to the authorship of a great part of those plays, which, collectively, were published in the Folio of 1623 as *The Workes of William Shakespeare*; that it was not really player Shakspere whom he had in mind when he writes of the "Sweet Swan" whose reappearance upon the Thames he so much desires:—

"What a sight it were  
To see thee in *our waters* yet appeare  
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames  
That so did take Eliza, and our James!"

“But if that is his [i.e. my] case,” says Canon Beeching, “must he not at this point bring evidence that Jonson was a notorious liar?” Now I have dealt with that well-worn, and, as it seems to me, futile objection more than once in my book. For example, at p. 499, I write as follows:—“But some good person will exclaim, with an air of much virtuous indignation, do you mean to suggest than Ben Jonson, ‘honest Ben,’ would have deliberately made himself party to a lie? I reply once more that Jonson’s namesake, the great lexicographer, defined a lie as ‘a criminal falsehood,’ meaning thereby, of course, an unjustifiable or immoral falsehood; that justifiable falsehoods are not lies; that whether or not a particular false statement is or is not justifiable is a matter for the individual conscience (Scott, for instance, thought he was quite justified in denying the authorship of *Waverley* when questioned on the subject); that ‘there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so’; that, for all we know, Jonson might have seen nothing in the least degree objectionable in the publication by some great personage of his dramatic works under a pseudonym, even though that pseudonym led to a wrong conception as to the authorship”; and more to the like effect.

But I have yet more to say to Canon Beeching. I have argued, following Malone, that it was

Jonson who wrote the preface "to the great variety of readers," signed by the players Heminge and Condell. In this opinion Canon Beeching agrees (p. 25).<sup>1</sup> But in this preface occurs the following celebrated passage:—"It had been a thing, we confess, worthy to have been wished, that the author himself had lived to have set forth and overseen his own writings. But since it hath been ordained otherwise, and he by death departed from that right,<sup>2</sup> we pray you do not envy his Friends the office of their care and pain, to have collected and publish'd them; and so to have publish'd them as where (before) you were abus'd with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds

<sup>1</sup> "I would *add*," says the Canon, "that one of the strongest arguments for Jonson's authorship is the passage *he puts into the players' mouth*: 'What he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers'; for he tells in his *Discoveries* that he had *often* had from the players this testimony to their fellow's facility." Apparently he had not read my note at p. 482, where I point out this similarity of expression. But the "facility" which Jonson speaks of was in his "excellent phantasy, brave notions, and gentle expressions."

<sup>2</sup> Observe "*right*". According to the author of this preface, therefore, Shakespeare, if he had lived, would have had the right to publish his own works, whereas the modern theory is that he had sold his manuscripts "out and out" to the theatre, and ceased to have any further interest in them, either financial or otherwise. He had not the least idea of publishing, or the least wish to do so! If he had really sold his MSS. to the company he had no "right" to publish, and this would be yet another false statement by him who wrote the preface.

and stealth of injurious impostors that expos'd them, even those are now offered to your view cur'd and perfect of their limbs; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceived them: Who as he was a happy imitator of nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together: And what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province who only gather his works and give them you, to praise him." Now what do these words mean? Canon Beeching, who quotes only the three last sentences (and the last one incorrectly), makes what I can only consider an unhappy attempt to explain away their obvious meaning, quite after the manner of a Biblical harmonist. But let the Cambridge editors speak. "The natural inference to be drawn from this statement is that all the separate editions of Shakespeare's plays were 'stolen,' 'surreptitious,' and 'imperfect,' and that all those published in the Folio were printed from the author's own manuscripts. But it can be proved to demonstration" that such was not the fact. "As the 'setters forth' are thus convicted of a *suggestio falsi* in one point, it is not improbable that they may have been guilty of the like in another," etc. So too that highly and deservedly respected critic Dr. Ingleby. Speaking of the players he



says: "Unfortunately for their credit and our satisfaction their prefatory statement contains, or at least suggests, what they must have known to be false. They would lead us to believe that their edition was printed from Shakespeare's manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> . . . Now we have positive knowledge of a fact inconsistent with this excerpt." (*Shakespeare: The Man and The Book*, p. 66.)

But Canon Beeching agrees with me that Jonson wrote this preface to which the signatures of Messrs. Heminge and Condell were appended. Jonson, therefore, was a party to a statement which he knew to be false; he is convicted of a deliberate *suggestio falsi*, to use the mildest term! Are we, then, to set down Jonson as "a liar"? Well, Canon Beeching may do so if he pleases. I prefer to think that the standard of strict literary veracity in those spacious times not being up to the high level at which it now stands (as we hope at any rate), old Ben was under the impression that he had only committed a very venial offence, if, indeed, he did not think himself entirely justified in what he did.

But now with the Cambridge editors we can

<sup>1</sup> Here he quotes the statement about the papers without a blot, which the players say that they had "received from him." Canon Beeching says this is "an advertisement of the inspiration of the plays, not of the state of the text"! Mr. Lee, on the other hand, writes "clearly they wished to suggest that the printers worked exclusively from Shakespeare's undefiled autograph"! Introduction to the Folio Facsimile, p. xvii.

say, *mutatis mutandis*, if Jonson is "thus convicted of a *suggestio falsi* in one point, it is not improbable that" he "may have been guilty of the like in another." *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

Canon Beeching quotes at length, as I have quoted (p. 478), Jonson's well-known and very remarkable reference to Shakespeare in his *Timber or Discoveries*, and he puts his own gloss upon what I have ventured to say about it. I write (at page 481), "*sufflaminandus erat*, i.e. in modern English, he had to be shut up!" Canon Beeching interprets this to mean that I suppose Jonson is referring to Shakspeare as a player *on the stage*, where "evidently he used to 'gag,'" and therefore had to be stopped! The reader will not, I think, be surprised to learn, by this time, that I say nothing of the kind. I never make any reference to "gag" in this connexion, nor had I such a thing in my mind. True it is that I write, "Surely it is of the player, not the poet, that Jonson speaks when he says that his volubility was such that, like Aterius, he had to be (or ought to have been) shut up!" Yes, of Shakspeare the player, and not of the poet Shakespeare; but not of the player *on the stage*, but of the player when his tongue was loosed among companions—at a tavern, for instance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But see Mr. George Hookham in *The National Review* (Jan. 1909) at p. 846.

The Canon says "the reference to Haterius cannot refer to actor's gag." I never said it did, nor did I think so! Then, says the Canon further, "The heading 'Augustus in Hat'<sup>1</sup> governs the whole paragraph, and the sense of the paragraph is fixed by the first clause, which refers not to speech but to writing." I entirely disagree. Jonson passes away from what the players had told him about Shakespeare's writings, and comes to "the man," and I venture to think that the words "wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped," undoubtedly refer to speech and not to writing. The reference to Haterius, upon which Canon Beeching lays so much stress, proves this conclusively. "'Sufflaminandus erat,' as Augustus said of Haterius." Was it in his *writing* that Haterius had to be stopped? No, in his *speech*. "Tanta illi erat *velocitas orationis* ut vitium fieret. Itaque d. Augustus optime dixit, Aterius noster sufflaminandus est." Those last two words do not apply to writing. "Sufflaminare" means, as the Latin dictionaries tell us, "to stay, check, or repress *in speaking*." Besides, who would think of stopping Shakespeare in his *writing*?

As I have freely admitted in my book, the various Jonsonian utterances constitute the *crux*

<sup>1</sup> Is this in the original? It is not in my edition. But it is quite immaterial from my point of view.

of the Shakespeare Problem. The "Jonsonian riddle," as I have said, presents grave difficulties whichever side of the controversy we adopt—difficulties as great for the "orthodox" as for "the heretic." I cannot see that the Canon has done much to throw any light upon it.

And now, before saying good-bye to old Ben, I will briefly deal with Canon Beeching's criticism of my remarks concerning Jonson's Ode to Bacon upon his sixtieth birthday.<sup>1</sup> I may say at once that I quoted these lines incidentally, and perhaps unnecessarily, for I base no argument upon them. Commenting upon the lines

'Tis a brave cause of joy let it be known,  
For 'twere a narrow gladness kept thine own,

I ask (p. 490) what is "the brave cause of joy" of which Jonson writes "let it be known"? And what is the "mystery" to which Jonson refers when he addresses the "Genius of this ancient pile," as standing in the midst, as if performing some mystery? Thereupon I mention that "the Baconians assert that here is an allusion to the secret Shakespearean authorship, a secret known to Jonson, and which he hoped might soon be published to the world." I do not make the slightest suggestion that I share in this Baconian hypothesis; but I do say that it has not been

<sup>1</sup> See page 3 of his book.

explained what Jonson meant by "let it be known." But why, asks Canon Beeching, with some scorn, "should 'Stratfordians' invent explanations for what Jonson himself explains in the next line?

Pardon, *I read it in thy face*, the day  
For whose returns, and many, all these pray :  
And so do I. This is the sixtieth year," etc.

But, with all respect, this is *not* the next line. The words "*let it be known*" occur thirteen lines further down. Does the Canon really suppose that Jonson, having come, doubtless with many others, expressly to celebrate Bacon's sixtieth birthday, solemnly invoked the genius of the place to let that "be known," which was known to everybody? *That* seems to me a truly ridiculous supposition, and it further seems to me that the Canon has entirely missed the point of my remarks, which he quotes, I observe with a smile, as a specimen of my "forensic artifices." No, the Canon has suggested no plausible or reasonable explanation of what it was that Jonson meant when he wrote "let it be known"; but I will venture to suggest one. The lines conclude—

Give me a deep-crown'd bowl that I may sing,  
In raising him, the wisdom of my King.

This was on January 22nd, 1621. On January 26th Bacon was created Viscount St. Alban. He

probably knew of his coming promotion, and had, perhaps, confided it to Jonson, whereupon the latter cries, "Let it be known . . . in raising him the wisdom of my King." I make Canon Beeching a present of that suggestion.

So much for this passage. I repeat that I attach little or no importance to it, and the true criticism upon it would, I think, be that it might well have been omitted from my book. I should hardly have thought it worth while to correct the Canon's mistake with regard to it if it were not that I wish to exhibit his remarks as a fine specimen of his, I do not say "forensic," but controversial "artifices."

Referring to the passage in Jonson's *Discoveries*, above alluded to, Canon Beeching writes (p. 31): "If anyone can bring himself to think that Jonson, knowing that his friend Shakespeare, the player, was not the author of the plays that went by his name, and hoping (*as Mr. Greenwood tells us he was hoping*) that the secret of the true authorship would soon come out, nevertheless wrote down this serious judgment for 'posterity,' which, when posterity came to know the truth, would prove him either a fool or a liar—all I can say is he must keep his opinion, which I cannot share or respect."

Now for a long time I puzzled my brains in a fruitless attempt to discover what possible warrant

Canon Beeching could imagine he had for inserting the parenthesis which I have put into italics. I certainly have never said that Jonson, when he wrote this passage in the *Discoveries* (probably about the year 1626, or rather later), "was hoping" that the secret of the true Shakespearean authorship would soon come out. What pretext, then, could the Canon possibly have for saying so? At last, happening to turn back from page 31 of the Canon's book to page 3, I discovered the explanation. There Canon Beeching quotes my mention (at p. 490) of the fact that certain Baconians imagine that Jonson in 1621, on the occasion of Bacon's sixtieth birthday, was hoping that the secret might soon be published to the world. Upon this basis the Canon considers himself justified in making the assertion not merely that Baconians contend that Jonson was indulging in the same hope in 1626, but that I have signified my concurrence in this imaginary contention, the fact being that I have never said a word indicating any agreement on my part with the idea that Jonson entertained such a hope either in 1621 or 1626. "Mr. Greenwood tells us," quietly writes the Canon, "that he [Jonson] was hoping that the secret of the true authorship would soon come out." Kind reader, Mr. Greenwood tells you no such thing. It is pure canonical invention. Such is the gentle art of perversion

as practised by a "man of letters" of the present day!<sup>1</sup>

I now come to the last of the fourteen arguments attributed to me by Canon Beeching, and I certainly cannot complain of the words used to indicate it, for they are those which stand at the head of my own twelfth chapter, viz. "*The Silence of Philip Henslowe.*"

Canon Beeching says that "the argument indicated by this heading . . . can be stated and answered in a few lines." Shakespeare's company, he tells us, "acted at the Rose Theatre [owned by Henslowe] only between the following dates:

<sup>1</sup> In his note at p. 27 Canon Beeching asks why, if Jonson was in touch with the author of *The Winter's Tale*, as it was going through the press (in 1623), he did not get him to correct the blunder? And, further, "If the blunder struck Jonson as so silly that he could not help talking about it, was Mr. Greenwood's imaginary poet—the man of learning and culture—likely to be less well-informed about the continent of Europe, so as to be at the mercy of Greene's novel, on which the play is based, where the mistake is first made?" I am not very much perturbed by this question. I presume Canon Beeching has not read Sir Edward Sullivan's article in the *Nineteenth Century* for August last, on "Shakespeare and the Waterways of North Italy." Sir Edward there points out that there is nothing in the play to warrant the assumption that the period of the action is that during which it was written. The mention of the oracle of Delphos suggests the Bohemia of a much earlier date, and under the rule of Ottocar (1255-78) Bohemia extended from the Adriatic to the shores of the Baltic. The "man of learning and culture" would, therefore, I opine, have told Jonson, not only that he was content to follow Greene's novel, but also that the blunder was not his, nor Greene's, but Jonson's!



February 19 to June 27, 1592; December 29, 1592, to February 1, 1593; June 3 to 15, 1594; and with their internal affairs Henslowe had no concern at all. Hence the only references to Shakespeare that we could expect must come in the few months that his company was acting at the Rose in 1592-3 or the few days in 1594. And, as a fact, we have a reference to takings at sixteen performances of 'harey the VI'—i.e. 1 *Henry VI*—between March 3, 1592, and January 31, 1593, though no author's name is mentioned to that or any other play in the account. Where, then, is the problem of Henslowe's silence?" (p. 32.)

Note that, although "harey the VI" is mentioned by Henslowe, no author's name is mentioned. If it had been I venture to say it would not have been Shakespeare's, that is if by "harey the VI" is meant 1 *Henry VI*, as the Canon says, for I entirely agree with some of the most eminent of Shakespearean critics that 1 *Henry VI* is not Shakespeare's work at all. This I have endeavoured to show in my chapter v. on "Titus and the Trilogy," which Canon Beeching quietly ignores.

But again I must ask the reader to mark specially what follows. "To show," says the Canon, "that I am not doing Mr. Greenwood an injustice, I must give an extract from his argument." And he accordingly gives the following quotation from

my book (p. 353): "Now here is another most remarkable phenomenon. Here is a manuscript book, dating from 1591 to 1609, which embraces the period of Shakespeare's greatest activity; and in it we find mention of practically all the dramatic writers of that day with any claims to distinction—men whom Henslowe had employed to write plays for his theatre; yet nowhere is the name of Shakespeare to be found among them, or, indeed, at all. Yet if Shakespeare the player had been a dramatist, surely Henslowe would have employed him also, like the others, for reward in that behalf! It is strange, indeed, on the hypothesis of his being a successful playwright, as well as an actor, that the old manager should not so much as mention his name in all this large manuscript volume!" And here Canon Beeching, who is so anxious not to do me an injustice, breaks off the quotation. How does the passage continue? "*Nevertheless it is quietly assumed by the Stratfordian editors that Shakspeare commenced his career as a dramatist by writing plays for this very Henslowe who so completely ignores his existence.*" I then quote Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. I, p. 97), who, referring to the production of *Titus Andronicus*, by Henslowe, in January 1594, writes: "Thus it appears that Shakespeare, up to this period, had written all his dramas for Henslowe, and that they were acted, under the sanction of that manager, by the various com-

panies performing from 1592 to 1594 at the Rose Theatre and Newington Butts. The acting copies of *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* must, of course, have been afterwards transferred by Henslowe to the Lord Chamberlain's company"! After this I quote Mr. Lee (p. 35): "The Rose Theatre was doubtless the earliest scene of Shakespeare's pronounced successes alike as actor and dramatist."

Now if these statements, made by such distinguished and orthodox Shakespearean critics as Halliwell-Phillipps and Mr. Lee, are true, it cannot, surely, be denied by any man possessed of ordinary reasoning power, that the fact that Henslowe, who mentions the names of almost every other known dramatist of the period, makes no mention of Shakspeare, whose earliest plays (according to this hypothesis) were produced by him at the Rose Theatre with such pronounced success, is, indeed, not only a "remarkable phenomenon," as I have called it, but a most extraordinary phenomenon. And why did Canon Beeching, who is so anxious not to do me an injustice, deliberately omit the concluding words of the passage from which he has taken his quotation? I say "deliberately," because I complained of the omission at the meeting of the Society of Literature, when the Canon read his paper in reply to my book; and not only did I complain,

but having my book with me, I intervened in order to read these concluding words to the audience. Nevertheless, Canon Beeching, in despite of my protest, has published to the world (or to such part of it as may read his "Reply") this "maimed and deformed" quotation, in the truncated form in which he read it to the gathering at Hanover Square. I can only say, Heaven preserve me from canonical justice !

Let me say further, however, before taking leave of this matter, that, whether or not the above-cited assumptions of Mr. Phillipps and Mr. Lee are true or false, I venture to think that the absolute "Silence of Philip Henslowe" with regard to Shakespeare is a very "remarkable phenomenon" indeed, for the reasons which I have endeavoured to set forth in my twelfth chapter. The argument can, indeed, be "answered in very few lines," after the manner in which Canon Beeching answers it. Some critics answer arguments which displease them by writing "bosh" in the margin of the book ; but that summary method does not satisfy all men. Neither, it may be added, does the method of misquotation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I once more append a note in answer to a note. Canon Beeching writes : "Mr. Greenwood's attempt at a parallel between Shakespeare's coat-of-arms and that of Crispinus is not very happy." But I have not instituted such a comparison. I have suggested (p. 459) that when Jonson makes Crispinus talk

grandiloquently about his arms he may have intended a hit at Shakspeare's newly acquired coat-of-arms, and I have further suggested that when Crispinus says "My name is Crispinus, or 'Cri-spinas' indeed, which is well expressed in my arms," the reference may be to "Shakespeare, or Shake-speare"; further that "Crispinus" may be derived from *crispo*, to shake, used by Vergil of a spear. It is just possible too that there is a sly reference to "Crispin Crispianus." The words "between three thorns *pungent*" are suggestive of Puntarvolo's motto "Not without mustard" (in *Every Man out of his Humour*), which M. Jusserand agrees with me in thinking probably has reference to Shakspeare's audacious "Non sans droit." But these, it must be admitted, are speculative matters not of the highest consequence.

## CHAPTER III

### CHETTLE'S SUPPOSED ALLUSION TO SHAKSPERE

CANON BEECHING (p. 78) has a lengthy note on this matter. He writes: "Mr. Greenwood (*The Shakespeare Problem Restated*, p. 318) has charged the biographers of Shakespeare with dishonesty for their interpretation of the familiar passage of *Kind-hart's Dream*, in which Chettle apologises for the rudeness of Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit*." But here the Canon's unfortunate genius for misstatement again pursues him. I have not charged the biographers with dishonesty for their *interpretation* of the passage in question. What I complain of, and complain of in very strong terms, is, that these "biographers and critics . . . actually so write as to convey to the mind of the ordinary reader that Chettle makes mention of Shakespeare by name in the Preface to his work, and that, consequently, the supposed allusion is not a matter of inference and argument, but a fact patent on the document itself! The usual way of doing

this is by quietly slipping in Shakespeare's name in a bracket, without any admonition to the reader that his name is not mentioned by Chettle at all" (p. 317). *This* I call a "dishonest method of writing a biography," and so it is. If these biographers fairly stated the terms of the document, and gave their reasons for supposing that Shakespeare is alluded to therein, there would be no reason to complain of this "interpretation," however widely one might disagree with it. The mischief is that they state what is merely their own "interpretation" as though it were an historical fact, and the ordinary reader, who does not examine documents for himself, naturally believes it to be so. I repeat, this is a dishonest method of writing biography, but I have, of course, made no charge of personal dishonesty. I am quite aware what prejudice and self-deception will do, especially where "Shakespeare" is concerned!

To come now to the "interpretation" of the passage. Canon Beeching states that "only Mr. Fleay, and Mr. E. K. Castle, K.C.," among known writers upon the passage, deny that it refers to Shakespeare. It is strange that he is not aware that of the same opinion also was that distinguished Shakespearean scholar Howard Staunton (see "A mistaken allusion to Shakespeare," *Athenaeum*, Feb. 7, 1874). Then says Canon Beeching: "I am not at all surprised that Mr. Greenwood

takes the view of Chettle's reference, because I once took the same view myself for five minutes." I sincerely congratulate the Canon for having taken a right view, even for five minutes only, though I cannot honestly say I am not surprised to hear it. The passage in dispute I will not quote again, because I have set it forth in my book (pp. 313-14), and it is quoted by Canon Beeching. The "play-makers" addressed by Robert Greene in his *Groatsworth of Wit* have been identified as Marlowe, Nash, and Peele, or Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele. Now in my book (p. 308, note 2) I express the opinion that Nash cannot be alluded to, because of certain allusions made to him by Chettle. I now believe that I was in error. I had not given due consideration to what Howard Staunton, Richard Simpson, and Dr. Grosart have written on the subject. Lodge, as I now believe, cannot be identified as "The Young Juvenal" addressed by Greene. Lodge was three years older than Greene, and in 1592 was thirty-five years of age. He was at that date "a weather-beaten sailor." On August 26, 1591, he had sailed with Thomas Cavendish for South America, and did not return to England till the early part of 1593. Therefore, as Mr. Fleay pointed out, he was not in this country at the time. These, and other considerations, seem to make it in the highest degree unlikely that he was



one of the playwrights referred to by Greene. On the other hand, Nash was seven years younger than Greene. In 1592 he was only twenty-five years old. He was famous for his "biting" satires, and was known as "Juvenal," or "Young Juvenal," and is so styled by Meres amongst others. (See the arguments stated at length in Dr. Grosart's edition of Green's works, Vol. I, p. lviii.)

The strong probability, therefore, seems to be that Marlowe, Nash, and Peele are the "play-makers" addressed by Greene, by two of whom, according to Chettle, his remarks were "offensively taken." One of these two is commonly identified with Marlowe. Who is the other? Canon Beeching says it cannot have been either Nash or Peele, because there is nothing in Greene's allusion at which either of them could reasonably have taken offence. I think that is an assumption which we are not entitled to make. Men very frequently take offence when it seems very unreasonable that they should do so, and the tone of Greene's remarks is such that it is quite possible that one of these, perhaps very sensitive, writers should have taken offence at them. As Canon Beeching himself records (p. 63), Greene makes a solemn address to them "to forsake their vicious courses . . . and to live repentant lives before it was too late," and we know that many people

strongly object to being preached at, even by an ecclesiastic, and still more by a layman ! Possibly the offended playwright did not relish being coupled with the notorious "atheist" Marlowe.<sup>1</sup> But, however this may be, I still maintain with Mr. Fleay, Mr. Howard Staunton, and Mr. Castle, K.C., that there is here no allusion to Shakspeare. *He* was not one of the playwrights addressed ; on the contrary, he was one of those players against whom they are warned with such a wealth of epithets—one of "those burres," "those puppets," "those anticks garnisht in our colours." Ah, but, says Canon Beeching, this is only "the illogical Tudor way." Chettle must have been referring to the "player-play-maker, abused as 'Shak-scene.'" Let me quote the Canon's *apologia*. "We must admit that Chettle should have distinguished more clearly the play-makers Greene was writing *to*, from the play-maker he was writing *about* ; but because he wrote muddled prose in the illogical Tudor way, we need not deprive what he wrote of all meaning." "Deprive what he wrote of all meaning" ! Certainly not. I give it its natural meaning, viz. that two of the playwrights ad-

<sup>1</sup> The whole of Greene's address "To those Gentlemen his Quondam acquaintance, that spend their wits in making Plaies," to whom he "wisheth a better exercise, and wisdom to prevent his extremities," should be considered, and not only the passages quoted by Canon Beeching.

dressed by Greene took offence, as Chettle tells us they did. Note also how Canon Beeching quietly assumes that Shakspeare was known as a "play-maker" in 1592, though he admits that he was not one of the "play-makers" written to by Greene! Why, when the *Groatsworth of Wit* was written, the name "Shakespeare" (with or without the hyphen) was unknown to literature, nor did it appear on any play till 1598. The *True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York*, in which the line parodied by Greene, "O tiger's heart wrapp'd in a woman's hide," occurs, was not published till 1595, and then anonymously. It is not, therefore, absolutely certain that under the name of "Shakescene" Greene himself was referring to Shakspeare (or Shake-speare), though it, of course, seems probable that he did so. But having made this assumption I decline to go further and to distort the plain meaning of English in order to find an unwarranted allusion to William Shakspeare, which the Stratfordians, of course, grasp at, as drowning men grasp at a straw. Why, writes Mr. Edwin Reed, "even Dr. Ingleby admits that Chettle's commendatory words cannot be applied to Shakspeare without a violation of the text. It is necessary, he says, to interpolate a few words, to the effect that Greene wrote his letter *to* divers playwrights, his friends and associates, and *against* another, his avowed enemy, and that two of these,

*including the latter*, took offence!" "No wonder," he continues, "that Dr. Ingleby finally confesses, in despair, that contemporary evidence on this point is 'contemporary rumour,' and that he attaches 'little weight' to it." It appears, therefore, that the learned Dr. Ingleby had, at any rate, grave doubts about the "interpretation" of this passage.<sup>1</sup> And has Canon Beeching, who is so certain on this matter, actually forgotten that even Professor Churton Collins himself recognized, at any rate as recently as the year 1901, when he published his *Ephemera Critica* (however much he may have "let himself go" afterwards upon the tide of controversy), that there is no certainty at all about this matter? "It is at least doubtful," he then wrote (in his review of "Lee's Life of Shakespeare"), "whether the supposed allusion to him in *Greene's Groat's Worth of Wit*, and in Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream* have any reference to him at all." Perhaps after all it was truth which shone upon the Canon for that all too short interval of just "five minutes"! But then, says the Canon, the man alluded to by Chettle was "excellent in the quality he professes," and "in those days there was no 'quality' or profession of authorship." Well, I am not quite sure of that. There was such, or something much

<sup>1</sup> I take the above from the late Mr. Edwin Reed's *Bacon vs. Shakspeare*, p. 152.

like it, about the middle of the seventeenth century, for Butler writes :—

He served his Master  
In *quality* of poetaster.

But, however that may be, I have shown in my book (p. 317, note 2) that the word “quality,” though frequently used of the actor’s profession, is by no means confined to that, but is applied to many another occupation or calling. But even though it should be unwarrantably assumed that in “quality” there must be an allusion to the actor’s profession, it by no means follows that the allusion is to Shakspeare. For was not George Peele, one of the playwrights addressed by Greene, an actor also? “There seems sufficient proof,” writes Principal Ward, “that he was a successful player as well as a playwright. Fleay (*English Drama*, ii. 154) concludes that Peele left the Lord Admiral’s Company of Players (Henslowe) and joined the Queen’s Men in 1589” (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). It is by no means impossible, therefore, that Peele may be the person alluded to by Chettle in this celebrated passage.<sup>1</sup> However, the Stratfordian critics will, of course, adhere to their own “interpretation,” however unwarranted and how-

<sup>1</sup> Nash, in an epistle prefixed to Greene’s *Arcadia* (1589), writes of Peele’s “pregnant dexteritie of wit, and manifold variety of invention, wherein, *me judice*, he goeth a step beyond all that write.” Peele was not only “excellent in the quality” he professed, but he had much “facetious grace in writing.”

ever strained. It is a too valuable asset to be lightly given up, for upon this flimsy basis has been erected a huge pile of mythological superstructure. But let them, at least, change their methods ; let them, at least, have the candour to inform their readers that it *is* a matter of interpretation, and that *their* interpretation is entirely disputed not only by "heretics," but also by some very distinguished members of the orthodox communion.

## CHAPTER IV

### CANON BEECHING ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF SHAKSPERE

CANON BEECHING writes in his "Epistle Dedicatory" (p. vii): "In order to show more clearly what positive evidence there is for the traditional view, I have revised and reprinted two lectures given at the Royal Institution, which endeavour to set out the facts of the Player's life as simply as possible, and to show the congruity of what is recorded of his character with the impression made upon our minds by the dramas themselves." These lectures have no direct reference to my book, having been, as I understand, delivered previously to its publication. I might here, therefore, be content to leave my assailant, for I think I have given a tolerably complete answer to his criticisms, and demonstrated that they are, apparently, designed for those readers only who have not read the work in question, but are content to take from "the Canon's mouth" arguments which he has put into mine, as though mine they really were. I will, therefore, make but a few observations upon these

two lectures, which are headed, respectively, "The Story of the Life" and "The Character of the Dramatist."

In "The Story of the Life" the Canon follows the traditions with which we are all so familiar. He accepts the old deer-stealing story told us by Archdeacon Davies, Rowe, and others, not even rejecting the detail supplied by Davies (whom, by the way, Canon Beeching misquotes)<sup>1</sup> that Lucy caused Shakspeare to be "whipt." "Speaking for myself," he says, "I cannot be sorry that his resentment took this shape, because it has supplied me, times without number, with an *unanswerable question* [italics mine] to put to those persons who tell me that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon, viz. How Bacon, who was a friend and correspondent of Sir Thomas Lucy's, can be conceived making this unprovoked and very ungentlemanlike jest upon another gentleman's coat of arms?"—the jest in question being found in the line of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—

The dozen white louses do become an old coat well.

Now it greatly facilitates the task of the "unorthodox" Shakespearean critic that such is the disagreement among the Stratfordians that he can

<sup>1</sup> Davies says: "Much given to all unluckinesse in stealing venison and rabbits particularly from Sr . . . Lucy, who had him oft whipt, and sometimes imprisoned, and at last made him fly his native country," etc. Canon Beeching (p. 54), though purporting to give us a quotation, omits the words in italics.



generally answer one "orthodox" prophet out of the mouth of another; and so it comes to pass that the answer to Canon Beeching's "unanswerable question" is supplied by the learned and industrious Mrs. Stopes. This lady has written much and written well upon the "Lucy" tradition, and the conclusion she has come to is thus expressed: "I am sure that 'Shallow' was not intended to represent Sir Thomas Lucy; that there was no foundation for the tradition, and that the whole story was built upon a misreading of Shakespeare's plays, and a misunderstanding of his art." I will not here reproduce the arguments upon which this conclusion is based, but will content myself with a reference to the lady's writings.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, is a very simple answer to Canon Beeching's portentous question. Bacon, or anybody else, might have put these words into the mouth of Sir Hugh Evans in the play, so far as Sir Thomas Lucy was concerned, because there

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 32 *et seq.* *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1903, "Sir Thomas Lucy not the original of Justice Shallow." Yet Mr. Leach, in his account of the Stratford Grammar School, written for the *Victoria History of Warwickshire*, to which I refer later on, says: "*It is admitted on all hands* that Shallow, with the white louses on his coat, is Lucy of Charlecote, who had punished Shakespeare for poaching, with the luces or pike for his arms"! So far from this being "admitted on all hands," Mr. Leach will find that the more reasonable Stratfordians have entirely given up the supposition in question.

is no allusion to him at all! Observe, in passing, that, according to Canon Beeching, it would not have been "ungentlemanlike" of William Shakspeare to make this gibe at "another gentleman's coat of arms," because "Shakespeare at the date of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was not yet 'a gentleman born'" (p. 55). But wait a moment. Here again the accurate Mrs. Stopes may be of use to us. "The acting copy of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is taken from the Folio Edition of 1623. But a Quarto Edition was allowed to Busby in January 1601-2, printed by Creede 1602, 'as it had been divers times acted by my Lord Chamberlain's Company both before her Majesty and elsewhere.' A second issue appeared in 1619, *but in neither is there the slightest allusion to the coat of arms*"! Now Shakspeare, as we know, obtained his arms, after he had much "toiled among the harrots," in 1599, so it seems that the Canon is again somewhat at fault, and that the player was, at the time in question, entitled to describe himself as "William Shakspeare, Gent."<sup>1</sup>

In my book (p. 23 *et seq.*) I have shown, at considerable length, that the poaching story is a myth. Malone had argued to the same effect, on

<sup>1</sup> "The date of the first composition of the play," says Professor Gollancz, "may with certainty be placed at about 1600." It is, therefore, clear that Shakspeare had obtained his new "coat" before the passage supposed to refer to Lucy's "old coat" was written.

legal grounds, which I have very fully developed, because Sir Thomas Lucy had no deer-park at Charlecote. Canon Beeching, though he calls Malone "the most learned, and also the sanest, of Shakespearian commentators," declines to follow him here. Halliwell-Phillipps, he says, "produced evidence that Sir Thomas Lucy presented a buck to Lord Keeper Egerton in 1602, so that he had deer to steal" (p. 53 note). But what says Mrs. Stopes? "Sir Thomas Lucy never presented deer to the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon as other neighbouring park-holders did. The park of Sir Thomas Lucy was of his wife's inheritance, far away in Worcestershire." Really Canon Beeching appears to go on from error to error, but I suppose this sort of thing is thought good enough for the "Royal Institution" at the present day! Then he says: "It does not follow because Sir Thomas, not having the Queen's licence, could not indict under the statute (5 Eliz.), that he had not power to make himself unpleasant." What is "the statute 5 Eliz."? One might just as well talk about the statute 16 and 17 Victoria. But no doubt the Canon meant to allude to 5 Eliz. ch. 21, the material words of which I have set forth at page 25 of my book. Well, Sir Thomas certainly could not have "prosecuted" Shakspeare under this statute, as Rowe said he did, nor could he have had him "whipt

and imprisoned," as Davies says he did ; but, "doubtless," he might have "made himself unpleasant"! So we are now left with this "residuum of denudation" of the original story, upon which the biographers have so exuberantly exercised their imaginations.

However, let the galled jade wince, *our* withers are unwrung. It is a matter of supreme indifference to us of the "unorthodox" faith whether or not the story be true or false. If the Stratfordians are determined to maintain that their idol had got into bad company, was a deer-stealer, and oft whipt and imprisoned, and that he had his "revenge" by making jokes about "lousy Lucy," by all means let them so have it. It is, I presume, a weighty argument for the proposition that Shakspeare of Stratford was the author of *Hamlet*. We may be well content to "leave it at that."

But when Canon Beeching comes to lecture on "The Character of the Dramatist" he throws tradition to the winds. "Let me say unhesitatingly," he writes, "that I have no faith in the traditions" (p. 83). It is fair to say, however, that this refers only to "certain local traditions that Shakespeare's convivial habits occasionally led him into intemperance." Well, I am not by any means concerned to contest this point with him. As I have said in my book (p. 187), I place no

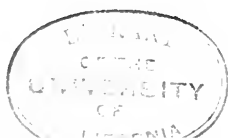
reliance at all upon John Ward's story of the convivial meeting of Shakspeare, Jonson, and Drayton, when Shakspeare is said to have drunk "too hard." I do not believe that Michael Drayton, the "other Warwickshire butcher's son" (according to Aubrey and Canon Beeching), was a personal friend of Shakspeare's. Had he been so, I think this "very communicative" poet would have left us some evidence to that effect. But whether or not Shakspeare at times indulged too freely in alcohol I do not stop to inquire. Other traditions exhibit him as a shrewd, cautious, money-lending, money-saving man of business (as I say at p. 230 note).<sup>1</sup> But there is one important allusion to Shakspeare the player which Canon Beeching (out of delicacy perhaps) entirely ignores. I mean the

<sup>1</sup> On one matter it is perhaps possible that Mr. Lee (whom I have quoted at p. 187) has done injustice to Shakspeare, namely, concerning his part in the scheme for enclosing the common fields at Stratford. It is possible that Greene wrote "I" by mistake for "he" in his entry of September with regard to this matter, as Canon Beeching (p. 74) contends, though Halliwell-Phillipps (Vol. II, p. 382) brings cogent reasons against the supposition that Shakspeare opposed the enclosure. What a pity it is, by the way, that Thomas Greene, who resided for a time at New Place, and was clerk to the Stratford Corporation, always speaks of the owner of that estate as "Mr. Shakspeare" or "my cousin Shakspear," and never alluded, in any way, to the fact that he was the greatest poet and most successful dramatist of the day! These "unbroken silences" are really most provoking. By the way, also, why should Canon Beeching insist on making Greene write "Shakespeare" always, though it is a form which he seems never to have employed! See Halliwell-Phillipps, Vol. I, p. 229.

entry in John Manningham's diary of March 13, 1601. Yet this entry, as Mr. Lee says, gives us "the sole anecdote of Shakespeare [Shakspere] which is positively known to have been recorded in his life time" (see my book, pp. 340 and 229 note), and its chief importance consists in this, that whereas John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, barrister-at-law, had shortly before, viz. on February 2, 1601, made an entry in his diary concerning *Twelfth Night*, which had been acted at the "feast," in the Middle Temple Hall, as we may presume, yet he says nothing whatever to lead us to suppose that he in any way connected the play with the player. Similar reflections arise on the Petition of the Burbages, in 1635, to which I have already alluded.

Canon Beeching, starting with the conviction that Shakspere the player wrote the works of Shakespeare, is, of course, one of those who think (for this is what the argument comes to) that nobody but an experienced actor could possibly have written the plays. "He gained that skill in stage-craft—the arrangement of exits and entrances, and so forth—which only experience can give," and more to the like effect (p. 57). The late Sir Henry Irving developed this theory, and stated the arguments for it with great ability and much emphasis in his "Trask lecture," delivered at the Princeton University in New Jersey in

March, 1902, and as a reviewer in one of the newspapers took me to task for not dealing with that pronouncement, I will take this opportunity of saying a few words with regard to it. I am, and was, well acquainted with that lecture. It was published verbatim in *The Daily News* (among other papers) of March 20, 1902. I have just read it once more, and it is, certainly, a very forcible deliverance. But the title of the lecture was "Shakespeare v. Bacon," and Sir Henry's arguments throughout are directed against the Baconian theory, and the Baconian theory in its most extravagant form, as revealed in supposed ciphers and cryptograms. As I cannot enter the lists on behalf of that theory even to gratify the reviewers, whose desire it is to make me a "Baconian," I will say nothing as to the lecture generally, except that Sir Henry Irving evidently spoke from full and very sincere conviction, but, unfortunately, he seems to have conceived that all those who, though they yield to none in their admiration of Shakespeare's works, cannot credit that the Stratford player was the author of them, are possessed with "antipathy to the actor's calling." That is, indeed, a curious conception at the present day, when actors and actresses are to be found in the highest society, and certainly it would be a grotesque suggestion if applied to myself, for I can most sincerely say, with John



Davies, of Hereford, "Players, I love you and your quality." But one quotation from the lecture will best illustrate the spirit of strong indignation under the influence of which it was delivered. Sir Henry tells us that Lord Tennyson, on one occasion, in his house at Freshwater, "when a guest had argued the Baconian hypothesis, rose from the table, exclaiming as he hastily left the room, 'I can't listen to you—you who would pluck the laurels from the brow of the dead Christ'!" In passing I may say that I should have imagined that "thorns" would have been a more appropriate word than "laurels" in this collocation; but, that apart, is it not clear that all reasoning, of any sort or kind, must be thrown away on those who regard the Stratfordian tradition as yet another inspired Gospel? "I can't listen to you!" That exactly expresses the spirit of some of those (a few only, I am thankful to say) who have done me the honour of noticing my book, even though I am no "Baconian."

But let us come to Sir Henry Irving's arguments for the actor-author. In the first place I notice one very curious remark. It is this: Sir Henry speaks of "the elementary fact that the Shakespearian plays were written *exclusively* for the stage." Beside this strange pronouncement I would ask the reader to place Mr. Swinburne's observations quoted at page 280 of my book.



“Scene by scene, line for line, stroke upon stroke, and touch after touch, he went over all the old laboured ground again, and not to ensure success in his own day, and fill his pockets with contemporary pence, but merely and wholly with a purpose to make it worthy of himself *and his future students*. . . . Not one single alteration in the whole play can possibly have been made *with a view to stage effect*, or to present popularity and profit. . . . Every change in the text of *Hamlet* has *impaired its fitness for the stage, and increased its value for the closet in exact and perfect proportion*.” Did Sir Henry Irving forget that when he put *Hamlet* on the stage, with such great and well-merited success, it was not the complete *Hamlet* as we now read it—not the *Hamlet* of Quarto II—but an “acting edition” that was set before the public, and that from that acting edition was omitted, as it always has been from the very first, whenever the play has come before the footlights, what Mr. Swinburne has called “the one essential speech . . . in which the personal genius of Shakespeare soars up to the very highest of its height and strikes down to the very deepest of its depth?” All this revision, then, was not done “exclusively for the stage”—on the contrary, it appears to have been done exclusively for the reader’s closet.

Like considerations will show, I think, that Sir

Henry's arguments about what Canon Beeching has called "the arrangement of exits and entrances and so forth" have not really that weight which at first sight they might appear to have. "No actor," says Sir Henry, "ever had reason to complain that Shakespeare sent him tamely off or brought him feebly on." If this is true (and we may take Sir Henry's word for it, so far, at any rate, as concerns the great characters of the Shakespearean dramas, if not of all the rest), how far does this go towards proving that the author was an actor? The plays of Shakespeare—some of them at least—have been continually acted for upwards of three hundred years; with few exceptions they had been acted again and again before they were given to the world in print; we are constantly told that many of them, as they appear in the Folio of 1623, were printed from "prompt copies." Even an amateur actor knows what that means. It means that they had been fashioned according to the requirements of the stage—that they had been "licked into shape" by the stage manager. If it was found that any "exit or entrance" had been badly conceived, the fault could, of course, have been, and doubtless was, very soon rectified.

These considerations apply to all those Shakespearean dramas that are habitually placed upon the boards. But there are not a few which no

manager ever thinks of mounting, and these for the most part, so far from showing the writing of an actor with an exclusive view to the stage, exhibit the work of a literary man, writing, as Mr. Swinburne says, "with an eye to the literary perfection" of his work; writing not for an ephemeral audience, but for posterity; writing not for the *stage*, but for the *study*. As Mr. R. M. Theobald very truly writes (I trust I may be forgiven for quoting from a Baconian): "So much is this the case, that about half of his (Shakespeare's) plays are never put on the boards, and probably were never intended for the theatre, being quite unsuitable for scenic effect. It is surely a most significant fact that the greatest of all dramatists has written so large a proportion of plays which must be valued not for their scenic merits, but for quite other reasons. *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon*, for instance, could not have been written by a stage manager, making copy for his boards, looking chiefly, or in any way, at the market value of his poetical inventions. Even *Hamlet*, attractive as it is, if it were produced without abridgment, would be intolerable."<sup>1</sup> No doubt Sir Henry Irving, when playing the oft-played rôles of Hamlet, or Macbeth, or Shylock, found that his "exits and entrances" were all admirably

<sup>1</sup> *Shakespeare Studies in Baconian Light*, p. 154.

arranged. I wonder how he would have fared if he had essayed a part in *Troilus and Cressida*, for example!

Of a truth, then, when we come to consider the matter, there seems to be no more reason why the plays of Shakespeare must have been written by an actor, than why we should be compelled to affirm the same concerning *The Rivals*, and *The Critic*, and *The School for Scandal*. Sheridan's case, indeed, deserves consideration in this connexion. His father, it is true, had been an actor, and was for some years manager of the Dublin Theatre; but, in 1762, when Richard Brinsley was but eleven years of age, his parents settled in England, and the future dramatist and statesman was sent to Harrow. In 1774, when he was about twenty-three, he produced *The Rivals*, and at that time we may say with confidence that he knew little or nothing about the theatre. For this excellent comedy he had, as Mr. Rudolf Dircks says, "drawn freely on his late experiences. His life at Bath gave the atmosphere; his stolen interviews with Miss Linley, the duels, the numerous suitors, the unreasonable jealousies, provided the incidents and characters." In the same year *The Duenna* was produced with brilliant success. In 1777, when the author was only twenty-six, appeared *The School for Scandal*, which Hazlitt has pro-

nounced "the most finished and faultless comedy which we have," and which, according to Mr. Dircks, "remains the most brilliantly effective comedy in our tongue." Here, again, "the materials were principally gathered from his Bath experiences." In these comedies the "exits and entrances" are admirably managed, though it is probable enough that it was not till the play was put into rehearsal that these were finally arranged. Yet the young playwright knew nothing of the *technique* of the stage at that time. Later on, when he wrote *Pizzaro*, it was very different. Let me again quote Mr. Dircks: "Nowadays, we hear that to be a good dramatist it is essential above all things to inhale 'the scent of the footlights.' *Pizzaro* is nauseating with this. Since the day of *The Rivals* and *The Critic*, Sheridan's long association with the theatre had thoroughly acclimatized him to the atmosphere which makes dramatists; and we see the result. The tragedy shows mastery of stage technique, the action is smart; there is ample room for scenic display; claptrap in plenty—everything, in fact, we might expect from one who had inhaled that fatal perfume." In other words, Sheridan could write immortal plays when he knew nothing of the theatre and "stage technique"; and wrote a very bad one when he had long inhaled "the scent of the footlights."

This hardly seems to square with Sir Henry Irving's theory!<sup>1</sup>

I have alluded to the fact, upon which Mr. Swinburne lays such stress, that *Hamlet* was subject to careful revision, and that not once only, but many times, as it would seem. But this revising of Shakespearean plays is a very remarkable phenomenon in the case, more especially because there seems to be very good evidence to show that much of the revision was done after Shakspeare's death. I have devoted several pages of my book to this part of the argument (see p. 287 *et seq.*). Canon Beeching makes no attempt to deal with it, except that in a note, at p. 25, alluding to my "suggestion" (I should rather call it "contention"), "that as the Folio text of *Richard III.* preserves the misprints of the Quarto of 1622, and yet contains additional matter, it must have been retouched after the author's death," he observes, "a sufficient and more plausible explanation is that the editors of

<sup>1</sup> Against the opinion of Sir Henry Irving we may, I am told, set that of one who was not only a great actor, and stage manager of long experience, but also a very successful dramatist himself. I refer to the late Dion Boucicault, who, I am informed, was sceptical as to the Stratfordian authorship of the plays. I am indebted for this information to an American correspondent, who tells me that the fact is recorded by Mr. William Winter (author of *In Shakespeare's Country*) in his reminiscences, published in the U.S.A. under the title, I believe, of *Other Days*. I have not as yet been able to see this work.

the Folio took a 1622 text as the basis of their 'copy' for press." I confess I do not understand this. My contention is that the editor of the Folio *must* have taken "a 1622 text," viz. the Quarto of that date, as the basis of his copy for the press, leaving the twelve printer's errors uncorrected, the inference being that some person unknown, with the Quarto of 1622 in his hand (six years after Shakspeare's death), made additions and improvements, and thus put the play into the form in which it appeared in 1623. But there are many other cases of the same kind. *Richard II.* was published anonymously in 1597, but in 1598 as by William Shake-speare. The Folio version, however, is based upon the Quarto of 1615, but, while repeating the errors of that quarto, it contains many additions and improvements made, apparently, subsequently to 1615. Did Shakspeare do this revision? If so, where? At Stratford? But he had no MSS. there; he had parted with them once and for all. A strange case is that of *Othello*, which never saw the light in print till 1622. In 1623 it appears again, but now with 160 new lines and numerous important emendations. Again, *The Merry Wives* was issued in 1602, but reprinted in 1619, three years after Shakspeare's death. In the 1623 Folio it appears in a new and greatly enlarged version, with no less than 1080 new lines. Who did all

this rewriting and emendation? And what of the plays which were never heard of till 1623, such as *Timon*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Coriolanus*, and *All's Well*? Where were the MSS. of these plays preserved till seven years after Shakspeare's death? These are questions which seem to merit some consideration.

In conclusion I will say a word as to Shakspeare's Will. I have remarked, as many others have remarked before me, that there is no mention of books in Shakspeare's Will. But, replies Canon Beeching, that remark applies no less to the wills of Richard Barnefield, or of John Marston, or of Samuel Daniel, or, indeed, of the "judicious Hooker," and I do not for a moment deny that there is considerable force in the rejoinder. I take it that it was by no means usual at that time to make a special bequest of books. It is true that Shakspeare's son-in-law Hall did so, and as in those days it was exceptional to have a library, one might naturally expect that any one who had such property, and set store by it, would mention it among his testamentary dispositions.<sup>1</sup> But Shakspeare's Will is remarkable for what it contains, as well as for what it omits—not indeed at all remarkable for player Shakspeare, but remarkable if he were also the immortal dramatist. That player Shakspeare should make specific bequests

<sup>1</sup> Just as Fletcher's father (e.g.) by his Will (1593) left his books between his sons Nathaniel and John.



of his silver gilt bowl, his sword, his plate, his jewels, and household stuff is natural enough. As to the "second-best bed," it is now suggested that poor Mrs. Shakspeare, who survived her husband seven years, was bed-ridden and specially asked for it; but I really think that the gentle Shakspeare might have left his "first-best" bed to the afflicted mother of his children! (There is, of course, no evidence of this affliction, but that is a trifle not worth consideration). All this, I say, is natural enough in player Shakspeare, and, in fact, just what one might have expected. But from the immortal poet, the great philosopher of human nature, the centre of the world's desire, the man whose thoughts and teachings are not of an age but for all time, it is surely not unreasonable to expect something more than this. The critics seem to think that when they have shown that the player did all that we are entitled to expect that a player should do, they have done all that is necessary. But there I cannot follow them. From the writer of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* it seems natural to require a little more than that. "Shakespeare" was, it is impossible to doubt, an omnivorous reader. He had studied French and Italian,<sup>1</sup> and had large stores of

<sup>1</sup> "If he was at the pains to master Italian," says Canon Beeching (p. 58), "we may be sure that he read whatever he found worth reading in his own tongue."

classical knowledge. If we may trust Mr. Anders he must have read hundreds of books, and of these hundreds he must surely have owned some. What became of them all? They passed, it may be said, to the Halls as his residuary legatees. Possibly; but Hall knew the value of books, and Mrs. Hall knew, at any rate, the value of money. Hall was careful to make disposition of his "study of books" in his nuncupative will; but of Shakspeare's books nothing is heard. One would have thought that some of them, at any rate, would have come into the possession of his favourite grandchild, Lady Barnard, who, upon her mother's death, became the owner of the New Place under Shakspeare's will. But, alas, none have ever come to light, wherefore some worshippers at the Stratfordian shrine, more enthusiastic than honest, oppressed with the weight of this serious omission, and anxious to rectify it, have endeavoured to accomplish that object by forging the signature of "the poet" in books of a kind that he must be supposed to have possessed, such as Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, and other works. And yet Alleyn, who was only an actor, though it must be owned an actor of a very superior class, not only was the owner of books, but had no doubt how to dispose of them by his will! And is it not reasonable also to suppose that the great poet, the great dramatist, the great

thinker, the great teacher, would have had *some* thoughts for those priceless works which had not been given to the world at the time of his death—works such as *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Macbeth*? Are we really to suppose that he was careless as to the fate of these—that having written them for the company, “for reward in that behalf,” he ceased to trouble his head about them, and cared not a straw whether or not they were to be preserved for posterity? Are we to be told that this is a sane and reasonable belief with which all sensible men should rest contented? Have we really got no further than Pope’s miserable *dictum* that the immortal who stands for all that we mean when we pronounce the magic name “Shakespeare” was, after all, a man so mean-spirited that he wrote for “gain” and not for “glory,” and “grew immortal in his own despite”?

And now one final word. We must all worship at the shrine of Shakespeare. We must all admire, and venerate, and we must all be fain to love the creator of Hamlet and Macbeth; of Hotspur and Prince Hal; of Falstaff, and Bardolph, and Ned Poins; of Juliet, and Imogen, and Rosalind; and all the rest whose names are familiar in our mouths as household words. But what is this life that you, the biographers, have set before us as the

life-story of this Immortal? From first to last there is not one creditable act in the whole of it—not a single act indicative of a generous, high-minded, and great-souled man, not one such act that has a jot or tittle of evidence to support it. It is sad, indeed, to see how these worshippers are constrained to belittle their demigod when it becomes necessary to speak about him as a man in the ordinary walks of human life. And so it has come about that, as Emerson wrote, “It must even go into the world’s history that the best poet led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement.” His curse, it seems, has been fulfilled. It has rested upon those who have moved his bones, clothed them once more with the flesh of very common humanity, and summoned us all to fall on our knees before the paltry idol they have set up. With all possible respect, I think it is better to reserve our worship for “The Unknown God,” revealed to us not by blind faith, but by manifest works—the immortal works of “Shakespeare.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have more than once alluded to what the late Professor Churton Collins wrote, as recently as 1901, in *Ephemeris Critica*, where he took occasion to republish a review of Lee’s *Life of Shakespeare*. I will now give the passage in full (*op. cit.*, p. 213): “More than a century ago George Steevens wrote: ‘All that can be known with any degree of certainty about Shakespeare is that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon, married and had children there, went to London, where he commenced actor, wrote poems and plays—returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried

there' [I respectfully dissent as to the words 'wrote poems and plays,' but let that pass]. And, if we set aside probable inferences, this is all we do know of any importance about his life. His pedigree cannot certainly be traced beyond his father. Nothing is known of the place of his education—that he was educated at the Stratford Grammar School is pure assumption. His life, between his birth and the publication of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593, is an absolute blank. It is at least doubtful whether the supposed allusion to him in Greene's *Groat's Worth of Wit* and in Chettle's *Kind Heart's Dream* have any reference to him at all; it is still more doubtful whether the William Shakespeare of Adrian Quiney's letter, or of the Rogers and Addenbroke summonses, or the William Shakespeare who was assessed for property in St. Helens, Bishopsgate, was the poet. We know practically nothing of his life in London, or of the date of his arrival in London; we are ignorant of the date of his return to Stratford, of his happiness or unhappiness in married life, of his habits, of his last days, of the cause of his death. Not a sentence that fell from his lips has been authentically recorded. At least one-half of the alleged facts of his biography is as purely apocryphal as the life of Homer attributed to Herodotus." Ought not such words as these to give pause to some of our "cock-sure" Stratfordian critics, even although they be "men of letters," or so conceive themselves to be?

## CHAPTER V

### THE SCHOOLING OF SHAKSPERE

**A**S I have frequently had occasion to point out, there are many tabernacles in the Stratfordian camp, and especially is this fact notable when we consider the various phases of "orthodox" opinion with regard to the learning of Shakspeare. Broadly speaking, there are now two schools, with two distinct creeds, with reference to this matter. The old school relies upon Rowe (1709) and the "ancient witnesses." "His father," says Rowe, "had bred him at a Free School<sup>1</sup> [he does not say what Free School], where 'tis probable he acquir'd that little *Latin* he was master of; but the narrowness of his circumstances, and the want of his assistance at home, forc'd his father to withdraw him from thence, and unhappily prevented his further

<sup>1</sup> A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* took me severely to task for speaking of Shakspeare's school as the "Free School," though I had mentioned that it was always assumed to be the Free Grammar School of Stratford. But Rowe is our only authority for the fact that Shakspeare attended school at all, and he speaks of a "Free School" only.

proficiency in that language. It is without controversy that he had no knowledge of the writings of the ancient poets," etc., etc. This agrees with the "ancient witnesses." What says old Fuller, for example? (1662). "Never any scholar . . . his learning was very little." What says the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford? (1661-3) "A natural wit, without any art at all." And what need is there to cite Ben Jonson—"small Latin and less Greek"? Finally (as it was fondly imagined) came Richard Farmer's celebrated essay (1767), which was supposed to have settled "for all time" the question of Shakespeare's "Learning," in favour of the opinion handed down to us by tradition; so that Canon Beeching, "D.Litt.," is found writing in *The Guardian* of January 8, 1902, "Every literary critic knows that the Shakespearian plays reveal precisely that small Latin and less Greek which Jonson, who did know his classics, attributed to Shakespeare." But

multa renascentur quæ iam cecidere, cadentque  
quæ nunc sunt in honore;

and so it came to pass that little more than a year after that confident pronouncement was made, as to what "every literary critic knows," the late Professor Churton Collins published his scholarly and illuminating articles in *The Fortnightly Review*, in which he showed conclusively, as many

think who are quite competent to judge, that the writer of the *Plays* and *Poems* of "Shakespeare" must have had large Latin certainly, and not improbably a fair amount of Greek as well. Thus does the whirligig of time bring its revenges, and thus do we see how dangerous it is to build castles upon the shifting sands of Shakespearean controversy.

But since it has now been generally recognized that Professor Churton Collins's main contention is established by a careful consideration of "the works themselves," even although some may think that all his conclusions are not justified, a new school of opinion has arisen, or, perhaps, I should rather say, has come to life once more, with regard to the learning of Shakespeare, which actually holds that the immortal poet, the myriad-minded man, the great philosopher of human nature, the great teacher whose sayings are applicable "to all the needful uses of our lives"—I say this school actually holds of him that he was a highly cultured, a well-educated, and, indeed, a learned man! Well, perhaps the proposition, when it comes to be considered, will not be found an extravagant one after all.

But this being so, it is obviously necessary, on the time-honoured assumption that Shakspeare the player is identical with Shakespeare the poet, that we should remodel our ideas concerning the



schooling and education of the man whom Dr. Garnett thought himself justified in styling, in his early days, "a Stratford rustic." For this purpose it is, further, obviously necessary that we should make the following assumptions: (1) The curriculum and the instruction given at the Free Grammar School of Stratford was on a par with those of the very best schools in England at the time; (2) the masters must have been distinguished University scholars, and thoroughly competent to teach; (3) Shakspeare must have attended the school at a very early age, let us say "seven"; (4) he must, even though by nature a stupendous genius, have applied himself to his lessons with a certain amount of assiduity; (5) he must have remained in attendance at the school for a sufficient number of years to have enabled him to reach the highest classes; (6) with this object, therefore (even though it may have been conclusively shown that Rowe spake no less than truth concerning his father's financial difficulties and need of assistance), we must discard as worthless the hitherto accepted tradition that Shakspeare was removed from school at the age of thirteen.

These necessary propositions are now accepted and maintained by that school of the "orthodox" which founds itself upon "the works themselves," putting aside, as a *quantité négligeable*, the testimony of the old note-collectors, memoir-writers,

and biographers. For myself, I welcome this new school; but, verily, those who join it must beware. They are on the slippery slopes of rationalistic thought! One step more and they may find themselves among the "heretics."

I have, however, neither time, space, nor inclination to enter once more upon the vexed question of the learning of Shakespeare. My object, for the moment, is to consider some observations made by my friend, Mr. A. F. Leach, and published in the *Victoria History of Warwickshire*, relating to the masters of the Stratford Grammar School from 1569 to 1578. Mr. Leach is an authority upon old English Grammar Schools, and I regret that I had not seen his remarks concerning Shakspeare's schooling before I published *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*.

I will first consider his observations upon the three Stratford schoolmasters, whose names we know so well, viz. Roche, Hunt, and Jenkins, premising that the period which it is important for our purposes to have regard to, is that between the years 1571 and 1577; for if Shakspeare was sent to school at the very early age of seven (as is so frequently assumed), he commenced there at the former date; and if he was taken away at thirteen, as most of the biographers have hitherto thought probable, he left at the latter date. Of course it cannot be *proved* that he left school so

early, but then it cannot be *proved* that he went to school at all, whether at Stratford or elsewhere.

The question then arises, Under what master, or masters, is it probable that Shakspeare received such instruction as may be assumed to have been given to him at the Stratford School? Upon this matter Mr. Leach writes as follows (*op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 335): "In 1569 we find a new master, the account rendered 27 January, 1569-70, showing 'paid to Mr. Acton the scolemaster for his wages £20.' This Acton was, *no doubt*,<sup>1</sup> Thomas Acton, student of Christ Church, Oxford, B.A., 14 November, 1558, and M.A. 26 June, 1562. In 1571 he had gone, for we find the item 'Paid to Mr. Roche the scholemaster £20,' under 12 January, 1572. *He may have been* Walter Roche, of Corpus Christi College; Fellow 1558, B.A. 1 June, 1559, and *presumably* M.A. in 1562. Since William Shakespeare was born in 1564, and probably went to the Grammar School at seven or eight, Mr. Walter Roche may with great probability be claimed as the poet's first schoolmaster; but only while he was being initiated into the first elements among the 'petties.' For in 1573 another master

<sup>1</sup> When we read "no doubt" in Shakespearean biography, it generally means that there is much doubt. But as Shakspeare is not alleged by anybody to have been under Mr. Acton, we need not inquire further as to this worthy.

had come, a 'Mr. Hunt,' as appears from the accounts rendered 17 February, 1573-4. He was *probably* George Hunt, a Merchant Taylors' School boy in 1565, who matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1571, was a demy there in 1572-5, took his B.A. degree on 27 April, 1573, and became a fellow in 1575. *It is not unlikely* that he spent at Stratford the two years between his graduation and election to a fellowship. In 1575 he had left, the accounts rendered 14 March, 1575-6, showing 'paid to the serjeantes for a schole master that came from Warwick, 3<sup>s</sup>,' probably expenses connected with his coming to be interviewed. *Mr. Hunt's successor must remain unidentified*, for unfortunately we do not know who was the master at Warwick at this time. The next master at Stratford mentioned by name is 'Mr. Jenkins,' who, according to the accounts, received 16 January, 1578-9, 'for his half-yeres wages £10,' so that he probably came at Lady Day, 1578. The next year's account shows 'to Mr. Jenkins scolemaster £15,' and 'to Mr. Cottam £6.' The payment to Cottam suggests a change of mastership, which is confirmed by an entry in the Worcester Episcopal Register, on 28 September, 1579: 'There issued a license to teach boys (licentia erudiendi pueros) in the town of Stratford to John Cottam.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The italics in the above quotation are mine.

These, therefore, are the dates, so far as they can be approximately fixed, of the Stratford masters during the period in question :—

1571. Roche.

1573. Hunt.

1574-5. An anonymous master from Warwick.

1578. Jenkins.

1579. Cottam.

Now what do we know of these masters? They are sometimes spoken of as though they were undoubtedly scholars of distinction. Thus Mrs. Stopes (*Shakespeare's Warwickshire Contemporaries*, p. 243) has this note regarding the first-mentioned: "Walter Roche, Mat. Corpus, 16th February, 1554-5; Lanc. Fellow, 1558; B.A. 1559," as though all these were ascertained facts. Mr. Leach, however, very properly tells us that this Roche "*may have been* Walter Roche of Corpus Christi College." Such a regard for accuracy is as welcome as it is rare where Shakespearean biography is concerned. Roche stayed a very short time at the school; indeed, the position of master at Stratford Free Grammar School just at that period does not seem to have been a very attractive one if we may judge by the "*va et vient*" of masters. Five in eight years! In any case Roche could have seen little of Shakspeare at the school (supposing he went

there), but he seems to have lived on at Stratford after he had ceased to be master, and in 1573 we find him, when Shakspeare's father was witness to the conveyance of a piece of land near the supposed "Birthplace," writing John Shakspeare's name as "John Shaxbere."<sup>1</sup> Well, the ex-master of the Grammar School, at any rate, ought to have known how John Shakspeare liked his name to be spelt.

Then we come to Hunt, who is sometimes cited as Shakspeare's master *par excellence*. Who was he? Mr. Leach says he was "*probably* George Hunt, a Merchant Taylors' School boy in 1565," etc., etc. Unfortunately Mr. Leach himself is not proof against the perverting though seductive influence which continually leads "Shakespearean" biographers to convert possibilities into certainties; for, later on, at page 43, we are told of this Hunt that he "was an *alumnus* of the school (Merchant Taylors') which produced Edmund Spenser, and of the college (Magdalen, Oxford) which produced Wolsey and Lilly of St. Paul's." So what was before merely "probable" has now become an actual fact, *more Stratfordiano!* But how little certainty there is about all this may be seen by a reference to Mrs. Stopes's work, where we are told of this man Hunt that "all writers on the subject call him 'Thomas,' for which there

<sup>1</sup> Halliwell-Phillipps, Vol. II., p. 232.

surely must have been some reason," and she cites Halliwell-Phillipps, who writes "that 'Thomas Hunt,' who had been one of the masters of the Stratford Grammar School during the poet's boyhood, is noted as having been curate of Luddington in 1584, in which year he was suspended for open contumacy" (with reference to *Outlines*, II, 364, note 299). Mrs. Stopes herself, however, argues for a *Simon* Hunt, of whom she gives various particulars. Then there was, as she tells us in a note, another man of this name who became B.A., Oxford, 1566, and M.A., 1569-70. Mr. Leach's Hunt, it may be remembered, was "George." So that clearly there is a large latitude of choice! Mr. Leach's Hunt, it may be noted in passing, did not take his B.A. degree till April, 1573, so that if he was the man who was at Stratford as master in February of that year he must have come as an undergraduate. But it is obvious that all this is mere matter of guesswork, and that, as we cannot really identify either Roche or Hunt, we cannot have the least idea of what their scholastic attainments may have been.

The next master is anonymous, and therefore we can assume anything that we choose concerning him. We might say, for instance, that "doubtless" he was a fine scholar, a Fellow of some college at Oxford or Cambridge, and a most

successful teacher, by whose careful instruction Shakspeare "doubtless" benefited. On the other hand, it is open to us to postulate an entirely incompetent pedagogue, hardly qualified to give their first lessons in "*hig, hag, hog*" to the sons of the butchers, and glovers, and tanners, and woolstaplers of Stratford. As with Thomas (or George or Simon) Hunt, it is clearly a case in which "you pay your money and you take your choice."

As for Jenkins and Cottam, *alias* Colby, *alias* Cotton (see Stopes, p. 245) we really need not stop to inquire further about them, for, I take it, it is pretty certain that Shakspeare had left the school (always assuming that he went there) by 1578. Mrs. Stopes cites an entry in the accounts which I do not find in Mr. Leach's history of the school, viz. in 1578, "Paid to Sir Higges Schoolmaster, £10; *Item*, to Mr. Jenkins schoolmaster his half-year's wages, £10"; and on the 16th of January following, says Mrs. Stopes, Jenkins has the other £10, the master's "wages" at this time being £20. There seems, therefore, to have been a "Sir Higges" together with Jenkins in 1578, as well as a "Cottam"<sup>1</sup> in 1579. Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> This Cotton or Cottam is a mysterious personage. Mrs. Stopes cites him as being at the school with Jenkins in 1579. In Mr. Leach's pages (p. 337) he reappears with a Mr. Aspinall in 1582. Who was he? Nobody seems to know.



Stopes thinks that this man, Jenkins, was not popular, and so did not stay long (but none of them did!), and it has "occurred" to her that possibly "he had a strong Welsh accent which the burgesses did not like, and which may have struck one of his pupils so powerfully that he reproduced it in 'Sir Hugh Evans.'" Here, then, is strong evidence to prove that Shakspeare remained at school beyond the age of thirteen; that he was under Thomas Jenkins, who spoke with a villainous Welsh accent, and who reappears as "Sir Hugh Evans"! What more can we possibly want to identify the player with the poet? Only give Thomas Jenkins a Welsh accent to order, and assume that Shakspeare wrote a caricature of him, and the thing is done. But that is not all. Mr. Leach finds further evidence of identification still. "It is hard not to believe," he writes (p. 336), "that poor Mr. Hunt [he does not specify whether 'Thomas,' or 'George,' or 'Simon'] was the original of Holofernes. Is not his very name suggested when Holofernes enters talking of a *hunt*, 'very reverend sport truly'? He is presented as a prig and pedant of the most pronounced type." This is magnificent. We have now got both Mr. Jenkins<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Thomas

<sup>1</sup> I presume Mrs. Stopes means Jenkins, though at first I thought she referred to "Sir Higgess." Why should not "Sir Higgess" be caricatured as "Sir Hugh?" Who *was* "Sir Higgess," anyway?

(or Mr. George, or Mr. Simon) Hunt reproduced in Shakespeare's plays. True it is that, not having the ghost of an idea who "poor Mr. Hunt" was, we have no evidence whatever to show that he was, in fact, a prig "of a pronounced," or, indeed, any type, nor have we a scrap of evidence that Jenkins spoke with a Welsh accent. But clearly "poor Hunt" *might* have been a prig; therefore "doubtless" he was so. And Holofernes talks about "a *hunt!*" This must surely be conclusive! This is sane, sober, reasonable evidence, such as must appeal to every man of sense. How different from the wild guesses and imaginative futilities of the heretical fanatics! And in this manner the chain of proof

Might, odds-bobs, sir! in judicious hands,  
Extend from here to Mesopotamy!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nathaniel, the curate in *Love's Labour's Lost*, says to Holofernes: "Sir, I praise the Lord for you and so may my parishioners; for their sons are well tutored by you, and their daughters profit very greatly under you; you are a good member of the commonwealth." To this my friend Mr. Leach appends a very quaint note. "Are we to infer," he writes, "that the Stratford School in Shakespeare's time was *co-educational*? or is the reference to daughters, like the question, 'do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain? or *mons*, the hill?' introduced to put us off the scent and prevent us from supposing that the writer is hinting at the Free Grammar School of Stratford for boys only in the flattest part of the town?" I say nothing as to the very subtle suggestion that Shakespeare intended to "put us off the scent," but as to the idea that

But, to adopt the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's historic expression, "Enough of this foolery!" Let us return to Shakspeare's supposed schooldays, and to a consideration of the sort of instruction which he may, with any show of reason, be assumed to have received at the Free Grammar School.

I have shown that we can argue nothing from the supposed qualifications of the Stratford schoolmasters, because we really know nothing whatever about them. But those who, following Professor Churton Collins, have adopted the very reasonable belief that Shakespeare of the *plays* and *poems* must have had a good classical education, and certainly a very large supply of Latin, argue that there is no reason at all to believe

Nathaniel's reference to the "daughters" might indicate the existence of a "co-educational" school at Stratford, I can only say that if Mr. Leach had read a page or two of Rabelais before writing his note he would not, I think, have made such a curious comment upon this well-known passage. Nor is "the profession of the pedagogue himself" (Act IV, sc. ii, 80), which Mr. Leach thinks "not free from ambiguity," by any means puzzling when read in the same light. I can only compare with this ingenuous comment Mr. Robert Bridges's criticism on Malvolio's remark when he picks up Maria's letter, as to which see my book at page 15, note 2. Professor Gollancz, by the way, tells us that "the name Holofernes was possibly derived from Rabelais, for "Tubal Holophernes taught Gargantua his A B C." Moreover, "in his general characteristics, he resembles Rombus, the schoolmaster, in Sidney's *The Lady of the May*." But perhaps Sidney also was caricaturing "poor Hunt!"

that Shakspeare could not have attained all this learning and culture at the Stratford Grammar School. As I have said, they, of course, reject all tradition, and throw Rowe and the "ancient witnesses" to the winds. In the first place they keep Shakspeare at school till the age of sixteen or eighteen. "The assumption," writes Mr. Leach, "that he left school at thirteen, i.e. in 1575, has no evidence to support it." Well, it has, at any rate, as good evidence as there is for any other of the alleged facts of Shakspeare's life, and much better evidence than can be produced in support of most of such alleged facts. Rowe records it, having got it, as we are told, from Betterton; and it happens, as Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps remarked, to have received strong corroboration from records which show that John Shakspeare, whose financial difficulties are mentioned by Rowe as the cause of Shakspeare's being prematurely taken from school, was actually in embarrassed circumstances at that time. But, of course, if we are prepared either to abandon tradition, or to accept it at our own sweet will, as it may suit the exigencies of the case, the task of the "Shakespearean" biographer is infinitely simplified.

Then, again, we are told (and Mr. Leach is one of those who so contends) that the *curriculum* at the Grammar School may have been of an

extremely advanced kind. We are told to look at Ipswich, and Rotherham, and Warwick, for example. Yes, but we have not a jot or tittle of evidence to prove what is so quietly assumed, viz. that the instruction given at the Free School of Stratford-on-Avon was on a par with that given at the very best schools in England at that time. I conceive it to be far more probable that it was a long way below that level ; that the instruction given was of an inferior kind (though doubtless thought good enough for the little Stratford rustics); and that Shakspeare, in any case, did not stay long enough at the school to make the most, or anything like the most, of such instruction as was, in fact, provided.

Again, if Shakspeare was crammed with Latin at the school, as the disciples of this school of Shakespearean hypothesis assume ; if it be true, as Professor Churton Collins claimed to have proved, "that so far from Shakespeare having no pretension to classical scholarship, he could almost certainly read Latin with as much facility as a cultivated Englishman of our own time reads French ; that with some at least of the principal Latin classics he was intimately acquainted ; that through the Latin language he had access to the Greek classics ; and that of the Greek classics in the Latin versions he had, in all probability, a remarkably extensive knowledge" ; then, surely,

it is only reasonable to believe that Shakspeare (if he was, indeed, "Shakespeare") must have been not only an exceptionally clever boy, but that he must also have been an assiduous and industrious scholar. Yet all tradition, that is to say all the best evidence we have, would induce us to believe that the very contrary was the case.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A reviewer in *The Athenæum*, quoting my words, "And yet there is no record or tradition of all this prodigious industry," confronts me with Webster's reference to "the right happy and copious *industry* of Master Shakespeare" (*sic*). But I wrote of "the amount of reading which the lad Shakspeare must have done, and assimilated, *during his brief sojourn at the Free School*" (p. 96), and I went on to say that "there is no record or tradition of all this prodigious industry," which is absolutely true. But what is it that Webster really says? In his dedication, prefixed to "The White Divil" (1612), he tells us that he has ever cherished a good opinion of other men's worthy labours. He refers to the works of Chapman, Johnson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, and then comes the passage referred to by the reviewer: "And lastly . . . the right happy and copious industry of M. Shake-speare [*sic*], M. Decker, and M. Heywood, wishing what I write may be read by their light. . . . non norunt Haec monumenta mori." Obviously Webster is alluding to the copious *works* of these various authors, just as we might now talk of the "copious industry" of Charles Dickens and George Eliot. I should be the last to deny "the happy and copious industry of M. Shake-speare"! Yet Mrs. Stopes (p. 11), who really ought to know better, cites these words in support of her theory (very charming, no doubt, but wholly imaginary) that Shakspeare, when he came to London, "homeless and uncertain of a future, apprenticed to no trade [? as to the butcher's], educated to no profession, inheritor of no property . . . spent much time and study in Master Field's treasure house"—*industriously* working in the intervals of horse-holding and doing call-boy!

But there are some further observations which must be made here. Mr. Leach writes: "However uncertain the identification of Shakespeare's masters may be, there is no uncertainty about his attitude towards school life and the profession. He never mentions school with anything but distaste, and never brings a schoolmaster on the stage except to hold him up to contempt and derision. . . . Shakespeare seems to have detested his schoolmasters as well as his schooling." In support of this we have references to various passages in the plays, and we have already seen how Mr. Leach and Mrs. Stopes, following some earlier commentators, assume that "poor Hunt" is caricatured in Holofernes, and Jenkins in Sir Hugh Evans.<sup>1</sup> Now, if this be so, Shakespeare

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Leach (*op. cit.*, p. 336) makes a very curious remark. "In Shakespeare's first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*," he writes, "*the scene of which is laid in his native woodland of Arden*, Holofernes, the school-master, is a principal character." It is hardly necessary to say that the forest of Arden does not appear in *Love's Labour's Lost*, but in *As You Like It*! Moreover, it is really futile to talk of "Arden" as "his native woodland," seeing that the play is founded on Lodge's *Rosalynde*, where we find that the banished king "lived as an outlaw in the forest of Arden," i.e. the Ardennes! Then Mr. Leach speaks of Grumio, in the *Taming of the Shrew*, coming from Petruchio's wedding "as willingly as e'er I came from school," as evidence of Shakespeare's dislike of schools generally; whereas it is merely a proverbial saying, as Steevens pointed out, and is to be found in Roy's collection. But if it be true that Shakespeare "detested his schoolmasters as well as his schooling," it is in the highest degree improbable that he acquired much learning at the school.

must have had a very poor opinion indeed of his schoolmasters ; he detested them, he caricatured them, and he held them up to ridicule on all possible occasions. Nevertheless, some of the critics entertain us very solemnly with appreciative accounts of the high degrees and scholarship of these Grammar School masters. But they cannot have it both ways. If these pedagogues were hopeless and ridiculous pedants, fitly represented by Holofernes and Sir Hugh Evans, they really cannot have been such masters as would have given the "Stratford rustic" such a good classical education as is now claimed for him, nor would he, surely, if such they were, viz. high-class university scholars, have so lampooned and ridiculed them. And Mr. Leach seems to have some appreciation of this—some apprehension that he may have gone too far—for, after giving us to understand that "poor Hunt" and Jenkins were insufferable prigs and pedants, and, in fact, *asses* of a very unhappy description, he, nevertheless, tells us that "whatever the deficiencies of Hunt or Jenkins may have been, they were at all events scholars enough to give Shakespeare, the son of a Stratford glover and butcher, as good an education as Ben Jonson, the mason or bricklayer, received at Westminster."

This is, indeed, an amazing statement. As to



the legend that Jonson was "a mason or brick-layer," I have dealt with it at page 75 of my book, where I have quoted John Addington Symonds on the education which Jonson received at the best school in England of his day (see, too, pp. 11 and 12). Jonson, as we know, was a special protégé of Camden's, the great Westminster master, of whom he wrote,

Camden! Most reverend head, to whom I owe  
All that I am in arts, all that I know.

But, says Mr. Leach, the prigs and pedants of Stratford doubtless gave Shakspeare just as good an education as Jonson received at Westminster. And how did Shakspeare reward them? Did he, like Jonson, write appreciatory odes, inspired by good feeling and good taste, to express his gratitude to his masters for all they had done for him? Not he. He holds them up to the derision of all ages—to the scorn of all generations! What a delightful and attractive idol the Stratfordians have set up! But here, as usual, we have only to set the *bacilli* of one half of the argument together with the *streptococci* of the other half, and it will be found that they very quickly destroy one another.

And here I am well content to leave this matter of Shakspeare's schooling. That the young man from Stratford, who came to London about 1587,

composed, about 1588 (Fleay's *Life*, p. 103), or at all, for the matter of that, that extraordinary play *Love's Labour's Lost*, seems to me more deliriously improbable than any of the "curious myths of the Middle Ages"; neither is there the slightest ground for supposing that Shakespeare, in any of his plays, makes any reference whatever to the Stratford Grammar School.

## A PERSONAL NOTE

ONE charge of a personal nature which has been brought against me has, I must confess, caused me some annoyance. It was first made, so far as I know, by a critic in *The Academy* (June 20th, 1908), but it has been repeated by Canon Beeching, not, indeed, in his "Reply," but in a letter to Mr. R. M. Theobald, a well-known "Baconian," which has since been published in the pages of *Baconiana*, Jan. 1909. Canon Beeching, in connexion with this charge, thinks well to apply to me an opprobrious epithet, in pursuance, I presume, of that prescriptive right to employ strong language which, as the late Professor Huxley used to tell us, is always claimed by the theologians. The charge is, in the words of the *Academy* reviewer, that I have "stooped to taunt a well-known opponent with his Semitic origin"; in other words, that I have actually taunted a distinguished man of letters with being a Jew.

That charge I repudiate most emphatically, and with no little indignation. In my opinion to taunt a man with his racial origin (whatever his race may

be) is not only to descend to a very low level of controversy, but also to be guilty of a flagrant absurdity. One might just as well make it a subject of reproach against a man that he has been born at all, as to reproach him with the fact that he has been born of parents of a particular race.

How, then, has it come to pass that this charge has been brought against me, and upon what basis is it supposed to rest?

In criticising Mr. Sidney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare* I have called attention to the exuberant use which the biographer has made of the convenient adverb "doubtless," to buttress up assumptions concerning Shakspeare's life which have no evidence to support them; but finding it opportune to enlist the services of that useful adverb myself, I wrote, in parenthesis, "I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word!" I set down this most appropriate Shakespearean quotation as it occurred to me, *currente calamo*. I should have made use of it, in this collocation, whoever might have been the subject of my observations, whether Jew or Gentile. Had I been in controversy with a Greek, and had the words run "I thank thee, Greek, for teaching me that word," I should have quoted them, in a similar manner, without the least idea of taunting my opponent with his race. Nor did I for a moment conceive that any such foolish and unworthy reproach would have been supposed to

lie under my quotation of Gratiano's words with reference to my own use of Mr. Lee's favourite expression. Indeed, I am at a loss to see where taunt or reproach can possibly come in, nor can I believe that Mr. Lee himself, if he has done me the honour to read the passage in question, can have seen therein anything of the kind. Had such there been I would have most unreservedly apologised; but I can make no apology for an offence which exists only in the perverse imagination of one or two of my critics, and of which my many Jewish friends will know that I could never be guilty. Indeed, I think, "Save me from my friends" will have been Mr. Lee's own comment, if he has given a single thought to this foolish accusation which has been brought against me. But, it will be said, there is more yet. Have you not, on page x of your Preface, alluded to the fact that Mr. Lee dropped two *praenomina* in order to assume the one by which he is now known? Certainly I have done so, and if I thought there was anything in the least degree discreditable in the mere fact of a man's changing his name, I should both feel and express great regret for having mentioned a matter which might give pain. But I have never heard it for one moment suggested that a change of name, such as this, can possibly be made the subject of reproach. A friend of mine

has dropped, not the *praenomen*, but the surname by which I originally knew him, in order to assume one which is borne by an ancient and noble family; and so far from this being made a reproach against him, he has since received the honour of knighthood! Can it, then, be seriously suggested that if a man does this very innocent thing, viz. the dropping of two *praenomina*, and the assumption of a new one in their place, no writer must ever make allusion to the fact? That, surely, can hardly be maintained. My own reference was of an entirely innocent nature, and was made in explanation of the fact that I had been a "puzzled investigator" in the pages of the *Oxford Calendar* of 1883. That there is here, or was intended to be, any unworthy "taunt" of the kind suggested, I absolutely deny. I can assure those critics who have fastened upon these two passages with such avidity, that to one who holds the opinions which I hold, both as to matters of race and as to matters of faith, the suggestion that reproach can be found in a "Semitic origin" is not a little ridiculous. To make such a suggestion would be entirely foreign to my principles and convictions.

I greatly regret that such matter of offence should have been read into any words of mine; but repeat that it exists only in the imagination of those who seem determined "chercher midi à

quatorze heures." If they, by the interpretation which they have insisted on putting upon these words, have caused a moment's annoyance to a distinguished writer, of whom I trust I shall always speak with the respect to which his position in the world of letters entitles him, I can only say that I regret that most of all.

In conclusion, perhaps I may be allowed to say a last word as to my own position. A reviewer in *The Times* (Literary Supplement, January 7th, 1909), whose general courtesy and fairness I gratefully acknowledge, has, nevertheless, seen fit to style me "a rank Baconian." Now, as I have expressly disavowed this position, and as this is a matter peculiarly within my own knowledge, it is obvious that either my critic must attribute to me the deliberate making of a false statement, or that he had not read my Preface. In fairness to him, I prefer to adopt the latter alternative. As a simple matter of fact I am, in my present state of knowledge, entirely "agnostic" upon the question whether Bacon had any, and if so what, share in the composition of the plays which were published collectively, in 1623, as the works of "Shakespeare," but to which it is, as I conceive, beyond question that many pens had contributed, although one writer, undoubtedly, stands pre-eminent among them; "insignis ingreditur, victorque viros supereminet omnes."

But if I were to be asked whether do I think it more probable that Francis Bacon or the Stratford player wrote, say, *Venus and Adonis*, or *Love's Labour's Lost*, or the *Sonnets*, I should have no difficulty whatever in answering the question. I should find no difficulty whatever in conceiving that Bacon, who certainly wrote poetry in his youth (Waller, in the epistle dedicatory prefixed to his poems, in 1645, joins him with Sir Philip Sidney as one of the "nightingales" who sang in the spring-time of their lives), might have been the author of the poems or the play; whereas it is, to my mind, simply impossible to entertain the idea that these wondrous works emanated from "William of Stratford." *That* seems to me one of those beliefs which are generally accepted only because they have been handed down to us; because Time has clothed them in the livery of apparent respectability; and which "atavism" alone supports. On the other hand, to *believe* that Bacon was the author, without cogent evidence to that effect, would be ridiculous. I must be content, therefore, in this as in many other matters, and however unsatisfactory the position may be, to rest in agnosticism—at any rate until more light is shed upon "the Shakespeare Problem."

THE END





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